

# The Free Spirit

*By the Same Writer*

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|---|---|
| The Great Companions | 1908 |
| The Wanderer and other Poems | 1910 |
| The Adventure: a Play | 1911 |

# The Free Spirit

## Realisations of Middle Age with a Note on Personal Expression. Henry Bryan Binns

"Nous sommes libres quand nos actes émanent de notre personnalité entière, quand ils l'expriment, quand ils ont avec elle cette indéfinissable ressemblance qu'on trouve parfois entre l'œuvre et l'artiste." *Henri Bergson.*

London : 1914 : A. C. Fifield, 13 Clifford's Inn
New York : B. W. Huebsch, 225 Fifth Avenue

# For Fellowship

*FRIEND, for fellowship take*
*This book of mine, and make*
*Mystery and delight*
*Out of its black and white.*

*'Twas written for you : this*
*My setting-forth of bliss*
*Continues incomplete*
*Till you accomplish it.*

## Prefatory Note

SOME two years ago, as I was no philosopher, I wrote a series of sonnets, which would I hoped embody certain chapters of experience all the more personal and vital to me because they were not merely my own individually but had been largely partaken with others. Having written it, I saw that it was very far from fulfilling my purpose. I sought therefore what other means I could find to indicate the fundamental matter, which is rather an attitude of mind towards life and death than any system of thought to be stated. As to the sonnets, something in the structure and association of this verse-form seemed often to unite with my purpose, but it often resisted perfect candour of speech. The rhapsodical flights or impromptus are hardly to be regarded as poetry at all, if we use the term in its everyday sense; but the personal possibilities of unmetred rhythm give it an important place among methods of verbal expression,—not perhaps as a " form of poetry," but as a means of communicating certain realisations. The somewhat extended note by which the verses are supplemented will be found to bear in a different way on the same themes. The precise directness of that bearing may not be everywhere evident. Nor, when all is largely a matter of hints and symbols, need this be construed against me. For if these pages present a motley appearance, their variety springs from a single root.

This book is an attempt to get some of its writer's realisations into words. In saying this I do not want to disarm the critic but only to advise the reader.

In some parts of the country one may still cross a stream of fair width by means of stepping-stones. If the reader of this book will regard its pages not as a bridge, but as a sort of stepping-stones from the hither to the yonder bank of consciousness, he may perhaps so use them as to form the bridge himself.

H. B. B.

CROCKHAM HILL, *September* 11, 1914.



A FEW of these poems have already appeared in sundry publications. "The Beechwood in March" was printed in *The English Review*; "The Slave" in *The Nation*; "Spring" and "The Aspen-Tree" in *The Open Window*.

# Contents

# Contents

# The Free Spirit

## Soul-stretching

WHO shrink aside from peril shrink
In stature. I was free to grow
Large as life's ocean, on whose brink
Fearful, I wandered to and fro:

To unbelief a credulous ear
Lending, prevailed on by dismay,
Hindered by prudence, held by fear,
I minished more from day to day.

But now I welcome whatsoe'er
Struggle and stress—at grips with Fate—
May stretch my little soul: I dare
These billows that emancipate.

Either in life or death I'll find
Scope for the utmost of my will;
Bid the unwilling years unbind
My passion, and my youth fulfil.

This is the godly life, to be
Just so much God as manhood can
Incarnate, live almightily,
With Hell and Heaven in my span.

O now I breathe the starry breath
That quickens an undying fire
Of life : and deeper down than death
I know the reach of my desire.

And if within the recondite
Dark of the spirit's last redoubt
It roots, through all the worlds of light
I feel its branches stretching out.

Whatever of myself I win
Out of my peril or despair,
With all the inseparable kin
And pilgrimage of life, I share.

Alone in the light the skylark sings
And sets us singing in the gloom :
I, also, on victorious wings
An instant overleap my doom :

And though I know not how, I know
As Earth, whereof we spring, is one,
So every spirit's overflow
Replenishes the common sun.

## Spring Song

FOR me it is not spring
 Though the grey and the brown boughs break
Into yellow and silver and green:
Though the dark earth under bedeck
Herself in a blossomy sheen;
Though the starry stillness awake
With twitter and carol and trill;
All day though the cuckoo make
Merry from hill to hill:

For me it is not spring
Till—O, whatsoever the hour!—
Singing awake in my soul;
Till my brain is a-leaf and a-flower,
And my heart is grown mightily whole:

—This manhood, that lingered a-dream,
Wakens and puts forth his hands
On the world of things-as-they-seem,
Knows himself king, and commands:

Till I doubt not desire any more:
Free are my feet as a cloud
To traverse the starry-wide floor:
I troll out my singing aloud,
And the words from my lips that break
Leap like a mountainy rill,
Like an earth-born fountain take
Their rhythmical way with a will!

For me, to-day, it is spring,
But for you it is not,—for you
The boughs and the birds again
Are telling a tale untrue:
It is winter still among men! . . .

But open the eyes of your soul
And behold the god whose brow
Is bright, and his purpose whole
With the world's renewal: and how
The boughs of the winter break
Into silver and yellow and green,
How the shadows under bedeck
Them all in a primrose sheen!
Listen, and it shall be true
That my words are telling, for faith
Shall awake in your body anew
The song of the spirit that saith
"It is Spring! It is Spring!"

## To Awake and Bathe

TO awake and bathe in the divine morning,
  Giving my soul to the luminous air
Whose delicate breath is better than promise of happiness;
All the world one again in worship,
Virginal, stilly, serene:
Each little self aureoled in the light of the whole godhead,
My little self—thus to awake!

II

Spirit of Light! thou that transformest the world,
My heart that was blind awakens to Thee.

The trees stand up and shine:
The great oaks gnarling their boughs:
The tall clustering elms.
How the lithe young ashes up-prong their flickering tops!

I am glad with the high beauty of the oaks,
Luminous, rising up out of the hazel-wood.

III

It is worth all the price and patience:
This divine day acquits the spirit's claim.

It is not that among wet shadows
Primroses peep, and the first celandine,
It is not that for me the oaks in the copse exult;
It is not the dewy gladness everywhere among the grass:
But that—bathed inly, flooded anew after long drought
By the all-transfusing wonder—
I have known again and understood
The silence of Demeter, her wordless welcome
To the February messenger announcing joy.

IV

This is no meridian sun, haughty and dominant,
From whom secrets are concealed, shame hidden away:
Gentle and reverent, in this presence
Shy things come forth, secure.

Unto him whose spirit is such, radiant with understanding,
Who insists not, who is silent,
Unto him all spirits turn revealing glances:
They confess themselves to him and are unburdened of their meaning:
He brings them, as it were, words.

In his presence they discover themselves:
They sing and rejoice, pouring forth song:
He is as the morning light:
They perceive not he is there.

# The Lilac-scented Air

AS in my veins the lilac-scented air,
Rippled with willow-wren, and with white-throat singing,
Dashed with a starling's laughter—
So in my soul, to a hill-top air of Mozart,
Morning exults, a dewy wonder,
On the clear high crest of thought.

Begone! it cries to drowsiness—
And to whatever burdens it, Begone!
Begone, desire! Begone, anxiety and regret!
You mad striving, and you, willing-of-impossibles,
Melancholy, and argument, and explanation,
Pride, comfort, poverty,—
Begone! begone! begone—!

Do you not know it is May
and a new-comer in the dingle?
His warbling pulses out in wild waves
from the heart of the bluebell pool:
A new-comer is in my heart.

Do you not know it is May
and all day the cuckoo calling?
He has been to the South:
he has brought spices to the land he loves:
The altars are alight again upon the hill-tops;
The clover-meadows are like basins full of mead.

I have drunk of the light,—morning cool:
Day-springs well up within me.
I have drunk of the light of darkness:
A spring from among the roots of night
Is gushing up within my heart.

Do you not know—ah, do you not know
The up-springing joy—before and after,
And underneath the floor of death?

If there were but chink or cranny
How it would break through! What glad confusion-
That grave wild joy with the stars in it,
To set your careful days a-dance
    to the rhythm from Beyond!

## Nocturn

SWEET is the night air on the meadow margin,
Warm-breathing, wild-wood scented. The high moon
Unwavering, brims up the vaulted dark ;
While, from among the new leaves of the wood,
Through wafts of bluebell breath, comes bubbling, throbbing
From the world's pent-up heart at last set free,
The exulting rapture.
Ev'n for the hidden lovers,
Who lie together in the listening wood
And breathe each other in with ecstasy,
The May night is less passionate than for him
Who knows the tender air, warm, wild-wood scented,
The unwavering instant moon, the throbbing cry
Poured from among the hazels ; knows the swooning
Of life abandoned to the embrace of love,
And yet awaits, and yet paces alone.

For now at last, breaks from the Heart of Man
Into the passionate embracing Night
New rapture of discovery : acclaim
Of Her so long sought, so oft doubted,—ay,
For very anguish and despair of longing
Cursed, and with inextinguishable hatred
Sought the more fiercely,—now of a sudden, found.

Pacing alone along the meadow margin,
Out of his own heart breaks the exultant rapture
Into the warm and wild-wood scented Night.

## Discovery.

O, BY my thought—
But by thought's seeking, searching,
Till, in the way, it is lost, and behold, Thou
Breakest in light upon me!

O, in the fields—
But enamoured of natural things,
Worship of beauty blinding my eyes: there Thou
Breakest upon me!

In you, O belov'd—
But impassioned together with you
Till you and I are forgotten: behold, the light
Breaking within us!

To the needy my days—
But to Thee utterly giving
Me, in abandon of Faith: and behold, Thou
Day-spring, ultimate Giver!

## The Light

LOVELIER than the spring of day,
Light—whereon the spirit feeds,
To renew its eagle youth
From the topmost heavenly height—
When I climb to where thou art,—
Lift the vision of my soul
Up the high ethereal steep
To thy shining country,—thou
Art that aspect and divine
Effluence of immortal Joy
Whereof even the living sunlight
Is but as a shadow-blent
Symbol !—
Lifting up my heart,
With desire I drink of thee :
Feed my nerves foredone upon
Thee, O transubstantial—Thee,
Ultimate Reality !—
Thee attaining, I attain.

Here thou art not till I draw Thee
Hither : till, to my desire
Rendering thyself, Thou shine.

As, the sunlight to the sap
Answering, a bare black thing
Sprawling out its boughs becomes
All white cherry blossom—so
When Thou answerest me, there is
April glory in my soul.

## Alkanet

O ALKANET, divinely blue,
Pure azure as the outspreading
Wide wonder of an angel's wing,
The drought of noon feeds, like a dew,
Your eagerness ; its burning breath
Enamels over the pale hue
You had in the morning, with a new
Intensity of life that saith
One word of the delight they sing
Whose life goes deeper down than death :
A word of theirs I catch from you
O alkanet, divinely blue !

## High Noon

SEE the sun atop, crowning Noon's height,
Level beneath him the round world!

Level lies earth beneath and takes to the brim
Her full of him, ere, tilting to East
The light begins spilling.

While Noon's now at full
Brim-high with this effulgence of light,
Who has heart,—Come, drain it!
Who has faith, let him drink!

Come match your manhood against this stirrup-cup
Ere you go further!

You will not rob the sun, drinking,
Nor dry up his springs whatever your thirst!
Back with your head then, drink!

Ah, you would put off drinking till dusk:
You do not take at full, noon's carouse:
At dusk there will still be enough:
Ay, will there!—and ever too much for the barren-hearted.

Here's Noon! Here's the cup level with life!
Here's all Earth can take and give of the glory!
Who'll drink? Who'll suck in at his lips
the full tide of this godhead?
Who'll open his mouth wide to this wonder—
Feel his heart swell, his body dilate, his veins
Pulse with its dithyrambical dancing?
Let his eyes be blinded with worship,
His brain become pregnant with imminent births,
Wild with pure madness?
Who'll drink this noon?

Nay, who'll drink destruction?
I have seen strong men suddenly turn to ashes,
And proud beautiful women to Dead-sea fruit
On the verge of this Sea:
Out of its fulness their lips drew a fanged flash and were blasted:
Out of its bosom poison they sucked and perished.
Who'll drink?

This amethystine cup, this clear beaker,
Fills anew every noon for their thirst who take the Adventure—
A handful of comrades,
Between whom Death's blade thrusts vainly,
—So resilient the flesh of their union,
Perfect their faith.

They ride on life's errand ;
Across the impassable, building the bridges of love,
Franking for travellers with their own substance
The grim passages :—if haply any would pass !

Beyond the stars they ride :
Wherefore Noon's godhead
Brims not too full for them to drink.

## Road-makers

NOW, when after long
  Enigmatic hours
The indubitable dawn
Surprises us,
Its clear eyes illuminating
The night-obscured, the heaven-achieving Way—
  Who is that faithful,
Who that indomitable,
Virgin, impassioned, wise
Spirit, upon whose feet
We shall attain to freedom, when they cross
The else visionary bridge,
Print on the opposing cliff his thoroughfaring
And attest the promise?
  Who is that
Opportune god?

I see no god nor god-like man,
But a path printed by the feet of comrades,
Faithful to one another's freedom
And their own intimate need.

## The Clear Way

THE clear way and the sure!
No more the wilful groping, the fortuitous trove,
No more habitual instinct—
Now I see men who can detect the clue and catch the intimation,
Women decisive on their passionate errands:
Who, having learnt sin's lesson and been taught of error,
Long wrestling with the substitutes for freedom,
Have now at last discovered, in themselves, behind desire and fear,
The deep-set, reticent Elector,
Who, observing, is not cajoled—listening, is not to be persuaded,
But certain of himself and his supreme intent,
Serenely for his achieval chooses
The untried way and strange material.

Into the Unknown gazing, going,
He knows within his soul the polarising
Current of the spirit.
The innumerableness of the stars and all their myriad beckonings
Confuse him not.
The provocative clutching haste of chattering Opportunity
Puts him not out of countenance. He perceives
How that (for all her ready tongue)
She promises with ambiguity
And whatso he proposes to her does not apprehend.

A clear sure path—and only this is freedom:
This untrod way taken by a man's choice
Free swung to the magnetic impulse
That breathes, as life in the body,
Creative words within him.

# Comradeship

"YOU cannot frighten me, as once you might,
With bogey-talk of mad and moon-struck maids
Deceived of an unsatisfied desire
To dote on fancies. Woman though I be—
An unwed woman and a passionate—
I have looked madmen in the eyes and known
What madness is, have touched and tasted it,
And healed. The world is far more mad than I,
Though I behold forms it is blind to,—sense
Presences that it passes heedlessly:—
Hearken to words it cannot: pass, beyond
Its watchful knowledge, into spheres afar—
Returning, and it knew not I was gone.

"Ay, the world's mad! It proves the truth untrue
And stablishes its falsehood by device
Of putting out all eyes that cannot choose
To see its sight, and making fools of them
That contradict it.
I am not afraid
Of the mad tyrannising world, because
Against it I have friends, and am secure
Against my own bewildered soul, in them.

"When you are joined to truth against the world,
Your soul the weapon, no least jot of you
Held back: when all your being is the blade
In your friend's hand, against the hostile steel
Proven and shocked (your friend's the hand, and you
Only the instrument: your friend's the choice,
You but the obedient battle-clashing brand),
Then are you fortunate! How many a soul
Heroic, stands alone, delivering
Naked, his battle-strokes. But I have friends,
Whom, having handled me in the strife, I trust.

"My friends are of the living and the dead:
To whom, with equal heart, I give myself
As a friend may, jealous of his own soul
And passionately self-possessing, fiercely
Free. All their love is jealous of my love
Lest it enslave its freedom for an hour
To any of their wills; or grow unchaste,
In its virginity of pure intent,
To do their pleasure or receive their praise.

"I know what madness is. But though I pass
Where mortal feet have never trod before,
Am strangely entertained of heavenly ones,
And shewn the living shapes of wickedness
That haunt the ways of men,—I am the slave
Of none I see, or serve, or wonder at.
Nor does the common world grow strange to me—
Save its complacent folly, and the blind
Aspect it turns toward its destiny."

## Like a River

I SAW, bright-flowing between shadowy shores,
Light like a river. On its either bank
A multitude was gathered in the still
Glow of that mighty, many-coloured wave,
Their brows alight, their eyes fulfilled of joy.

And others down into that wonder stooped,
Which, like a gentle flame enfolded them
With the unenvenomed tongue of its embrace.

Into it, thus descending, they abode ;
Until its ever-pulsing brightness shone
Through every fibre of their forms, and every
Shadow within yielded its secret up
Gladly, through hitherto unwilling lips
Uttering the hidden thing as to some presence
Nigher than its own shame. The flowing light
Rippled receiving it, but clouded not,
So strong the springs from which its pulsing flowed.

And they, unburdened by the light, beheld
Amid its flow, as it were in a still pool,
Their own unwavered image. Gazing long
Into its all-revealing eyes, they turned,
Gave thanks to the hidden source mysterious
Of the wonder, and ascended, as men who
Having kneeled down for the manumitting sign,
Rise up to freedom.

Darkling though its source
And wrapped in secret, yet I saw the place.
For as my sight pursued its hidden way
Earthward I watched the Wonder separate,
As it were untwisted into strands of power,
The brightness broken into streams of light
Each from its own source springing. And each source
Was man or woman :—neither great nor small,
Foolish nor very wise, but of those years
When life, risen to the flood, will dare to woo
Achievement ere the flood begin to fail.
These, in their freedom, love and faith, are joined
To achieve this wonder. On the earth it is
Wrapped out of sight in darkness, that afar
It may be seen as Earth's first shining, herald
Of her full star that shall be, when the whole
Heart of her children shines, across the gulf
Urging its joy. On earth a hidden root
Untold of the earth-dwellers ; while up there flings
Through all the far-off sunlight overhead
The fragrance of a high invisible flower.

## In Limbo

THE neither quick nor dead—the shadow-people
Haunt here upon the verge of sense. They neither
Go nor return into the worlds of life
But linger on between them; watching at
The hinges of Death's vasty door, like hounds
Sniffing the odours of mortality
And pawing at the panels. For they think
Either to break the barrier that parts
Them from the living, or across the door
(Using the very door as instrument)
To signal, and converse again of the old
Unfinished business. Of the life beyond
They have but hearsay. They are yet unborn
Into that upper air, luminous, light,—
Into that place of freedom whereinto
The intense flight of the spirit soars away
Beyond their reach—the spirit bodied yet
In passionate flesh, incarnate yet in the clay
Of noonday blossomy earth, that overleaps
The bar, and wings into the infinite
Circumambient wonder, wherein the stars
Tremble afloat on the abyss of life.
Thither, upon that deep, whereinto soars
Our visionary quest, they venture not;
But cling about the lintel, jambs and sill,
The handle, catch and keyhole of the door
Through which in vain they passed, in vain they seek
Again to trespass,—or if 't may not be,
Yet to spy on the aspect, to revive
The dream, and catch another gasp of breath.

## Abandonment

LOOSING myself at last,
Even as though by death delivered at last,
Abandoning fancies, letting go desires,
Foregoing rewards and attainments,
Forgetting the wisdoms of fear ;
From myself and these dropping
As though from off a twig,
Not as a dead leaf but as a living seed
To quicken to its purpose,
Merged in Earth's common life!

Enough of my self-separated being :
Now am I ripe for love and death :
For Thee, O will
In whose sublime achievement my meaning lies.

Despite all past frustrations, follies, ambitions
That seemed myself and were not,
I know Thou hast this purpose beneath my mere self-knowledge
That comes to birth at last, willing my Self in me.

Wherefore to faith I give me,
Until Thou quicken and raise up
Out of the common earth made fruitful by my faith
This will of Thine, Thy Me.

II

To escape out of my door,
To be at large in Thee!

Here I have been so long in exile,
Beholding myself apart from every other;
Protesting, defending, identifying myself so long against the whole world!—
I who was never really separate or different
Or against any—fellow of all, and here so long apart!—
But, now I know within me the spirit seeking a voice
To sing in me, as in the blackbird, its starry morning song.

Thou art the spirit of all,
Shepherding all with urgent longings—
In wild Freedom, in passionate Love,
In perilous sublime Faith, urging all creatures forward
They know not why, till they discover Thee!

Thee, O God, I discover,
I am at large, losing myself in Thee;
Finding my song, as a blackbird among the boughs,
Finding my place in Thee.

## Dreamers

DREAMERS, whose visionary sight
O'erleapt the barricade of bright
Sunbeams, and in the dark discerned
Those worlds of wonder that we yearned
To see and could not till you dreamed
Their glory nearer us, redeemed
Us, so, from the old dreary dread
Lest our desires were for the dead
And unavailing ;—Dreamers, whose
Dreaming delivers from the noose
That held us in its narrow ring
Of unillumined reasoning
And strangled manhood's higher heart,—
You give us back our ancient part
In God's great Fellowship, again
Quicken the passion and the pain
Of very joy within us, give
Our pale souls the desire to live
A life that in its mortal breast
Nourishes the immortal zest
Of Will creative, Power divine.

Now would I make your dreaming mine,
That is not ours but yours for me
Until I win its liberty ;
Until, with its pragmatic prick
Probing my purpose to the quick,
The wonder wakens in my will
A word transformative ; until
At the beginning of each day
It leaps upon my tongue to say—
" Willing the Will Creative, I
Articulately prophesy
Here on this threshold, what I will
Of our great dreaming to fulfil
This day, and bid on earth to be
Its witness and my progeny."—

For when the thronging night is done
And I awake to find alone
The day-star out of all the boast
Of that innumerable host,
Like-mindedly, some single thing
Out of my myriad dreams I bring,
And set before his face, and vow
With all his daylight to endow
Its shadow, gathering flesh and bone
Till 't cast a shadow of its own.

The day is not to dream : the day
Is all to hazard as I may
Upon my dream's fulfilling. So,
At the day's break, a man will go
(Having washed and clad himself) aside
To a window on a prospect wide,

To greet the world with the surprise
In his new-awakened eyes,
And oath in that first greeting take
Naught to slacken nor to slake
Of all his dream, until it stand
And greet him yonder in the band
Of welcoming and friendly sight—
A dream awakened from the night.

(Now some are clouds and some are trees,
That once were vagrant mysteries ;
And houses some, that once were dreams,
Mountains and flocks, cities and streams,
Pictures, plays, music, books—and then,
Besides, the women and the men
Who were, as everyone may know,
Love-dreams a little while ago,
But now can bear daylight and weather
So aptly are they wrought together.)
—Looking upon the world, to swear
By the awakened wonders there,
One to awaken more, who waits
For my clear call at the dim gates ;
One of the wonder-thronging host
Of dream, that yet is but a ghost
Until I choose him from the troop,
Until I call, and bid him stoop
And enter, through that little door
Of choice, the world he hungers for.

The choice is mine, that I may choose
One and the others all refuse.

The creatures at my window pray
That he be worthy of the day
Whom from the night I call, for whom
I bid their living ranks make room:
That he approve him one of them,
And capable of substance, limb
And power,—ay, and the liberty
To dream a dream and bid it be!
That, living through the livelong day
By my decree, he may gainsay
No jot of my whole promise, may
The rather set his own oath to it,
And he and I together do it.
Till, dream and deed together wrought
Into one substance—as they ought—
Beauty should be no more forbid.
It would be very joy we did.

For truth needs doing: beauty seems
A dream till we awake from dreams;
A fading wraith, a fugitive
From life until we bid her live;
A wanton, till the oath we take
*Since we awaken she shall wake!*

## Now to Awake

NOW to awake,—we that have slept too long,
While all this aggregated debt was piled
Upon the head of every new-born child,
This ever-heavier legacy of wrong
Bequeathed by generations of the strong
Oppressors :—we, with flesh unreconciled
To old oppression, in our lungs the wild
Breath of the ocean, and in our mouth its song !
And in our soul the magnet, wherewithal
To magnetise whatever soul of steel
Draw to us, till we plant a comradeship
Through all the world of those who dare to strip
Their own love of its chains, who dare to feel
Through them the challenge of God's judgment call !

## The Deed

NOW every hour is crying aloud the need
For men awakened from their doubt to know
Themselves the bugles that to judgment blow :
For women whose intrepid spirits breed
The passionate faith that is the only seed
Of promise now the world begins to go
Mad, with the heady ferment of its woe
Flown to its brain ;—now it clamours for the deed
That justice still delays :—to cut off short
With one sharp stroke, injustice at the neck
And free it of the insufferable beck
And frown of them that make of it their sport.
—O bright-browed Wisdom, ere it be too late,
Come, snatch the Deed away from blank-browed Hate !

## Franchise for God

YE that refuse expression to the power
  And passion in our souls, against you set
The spirit of life itself, whose purpose yet
No tyrant hath defeated : 'tis not our
Wrath ye invoke : not us that ye deflower,
Refusing glory to,—bidding us get
Back to a dung-hill duty, and go sweat
For the swine's sake whose fatness ye devour :
But the Creator of the worlds, who made
Man for His Fellowship—'tis God ye flout
Chaining this manhood to your silly tasks :
Through all your secular debate about
His solemn service, ye have been afraid
To give Him franchise : it is all He asks.

## The Path

THE freeman's footway is beset by wires
Alive with power to quicken and to blast
The dynamos of life about him cast
Arcs of sublime potential: he inspires
That tense electric ozone, and acquires
Calm breathing it surcharged with all the vast
Portent of mortal life—nethermost Past
Uttermost Future wedding their desires,
And he taking their passion. Terrible
His gentleness, girded about with death!
Let whoso touches him endure the thrill:
Let him be clean of lungs that takes his breath,-
Lest by the holy spirit he be used
Fiercely, and wrecked as a false wire is fused.

## A Leader?

HEIR of the ages: spirit of glorious scope:
Child of the travail of eternity:
Man-child of the æonian agony
Of woman: son of all the souls that grope
Childlessly up the shadow-haunted slope
Toward the invisible peaks:—Is this not he
In whose victorious eyes we are given to see
Shining the vision of incredible hope?
Nay, they are set on a dream. Here's nothing fast
That a bewildered gaze might fasten upon:
This mouth has won no mastery to rejoice
Frail faith with the sure sound of a man's voice.
Its windy vehement words cry and are gone
Again into the bosom of the vast.

## To an Optimist

WHILE you gaze up unwearied toward the bright
Centre of being, and discover there
The cure of all diseases that impair
The freedom of a man, downward my sight
Reads the dark script that tyrannous fingers write
Across the face of earth. While you declare
The cosmic glory, mine is the despair
Whose presence deadens every day's delight.
Your sight of Heaven cancels not my Hell:
Your sun has only power to dissipate
The night-fog, that returns with his decline:
You reassure me not: all is not well:
I house with sins that only a divine
Vicarious passion can eradicate.

## Dastardry

FREEDOM awaits your chastity of will.
Now while your soul incontinently spends
Its substance making merry with its friends,
Or finds some harlotry of the brain to spill
Its life-begetting seed in, you are still
Wasting that power whereto the Almighty lends
His for achieval. Liberty attends
On you, whose wanton manhood might fulfil—
Would it bestow its potency on Her—
The last condition the high laws require
That hold her child an exile from the earth.
Your manhood has the power to give him birth.
O dastard then—O shame, the bright desire
That holds your heart a happy prisoner!

## Heroic Wisdom

I HAVE seen passion with the satyr-grin
Upon his greedy lips; have watched the mere
Idiot smiles of happiness that fleer
Across his partner's face, intense and thin
With the reduplication of his sin.
I have drawn back from abstinence in fear
Of the crimes committed in her flesh, the drear
World of corruption sepulchred therein.
Those violent, those passion-drunken eyes,
That reckless womb, extravagantly rife,
And this cold blank virginity that denies,
Give me no answer to the question "Life"—
That claims of me the will to humanise
Passion and purity, and rule their strife.

## The Counterfeit

I KNOW a man in whom the soul seems clear
And stedfast, such an one as love might trust
In all its difficult pattern to be just
And perfectly to its strange design adhere:
But (whether it dwell in him or lurk anear)
Some devil, with a sudden hideous gust,
Changes his smile to a satyr-grin of lust,
His soul makes drunken, and its vision blear,
Blasphemously to hail this loathsomeness
As love, and the freedom of it to magnify,
Who understands not what he babbles of—
Freedom!—prerogative only of the Love
That floods the soul when spirit finds reply
To spirit in the bodily caress.

## Emancipation

THEIRS is the need for franchise whom a blind
Horror of lust imprisons in the tomb
Of their own bodies, fearful lest the bloom
Of innocence should tempt it, or the kind
Welcome of beauty: who, because they find
Treachery in the flesh that is their doom,
Devote their passion to an iron womb,
And beget chains upon themselves to bind.
This their demoniac hunger should have been
That God-beholding worship of desire
In whose clear gaze beautiful things rejoice
As in a human sunlight,—have no choice
But needs must blossom; and must needs inspire
The passion that, imprisoned, grows obscene.

## Separation

YOU are a thousand leagues away; but here
Within my proper self, shuddering, I know
The insidious whisperer that besets you. Though
To me you have never spoken of your fear,
I see its stealthy features disappear
Before my glance: I feel the to-and-fro
Of its persistent company: I go
All day about my work under its leer.
Silence might stand between, and no word pass,
And yet our comradeship be sound and whole:
In your defence we could make common cause
Together, and snatch a victory. But alas,
You weaken to the nameless thing that gnaws
Asunder your integrity of soul.

## The Dark Choice

### An Epitaph

HIS will was worm-eaten with false desire,
A staff that would not serve him. At the stroke
That should have beaten back his shame, it broke
Cowardly in his hand. The foe drew nigher
Mocking his helplessness. Then, as a fire
Whose covered ember yet is quick, awoke
—Scarce even with a warning waft of smoke—
His spirit. In a burst of flaming ire—
One single sudden flash—what the spoiled flesh
Might not defeat with sure persistence, this
Snatching the other weapon, ruinously
Worsted. His body hath betrayed him. He
With Death's masterful gesture, doth dismiss
Himself from life to adventure life afresh.

## I. Possession

MY heart was void, and turned to wickedness
 Its hunger for substantial good to sate.
I chose a lewd false spirit to be my mate,
Who promised me in secret to redress
Life's vacancy. I gave her to possess
My body, and she mastered that estate
So that her will of it became my fate;
Without her motion I was purposeless.
Often, indeed, I mourned my wretched plight,—
To be a spirit commanded of its flesh
And do the pleasure of a wanton ghost.
Vainly I struggled; she made good her boast
That now I was so tangled in the mesh,
My soul was hers, yea in my will's despite.

## II. Exorcism

HER ghostly face eclipsed for me the clear
 Shining discoveries of the day's light
That I forgot them. I had now no sight
For any real thing if she were near.
Weakly I turned to her from the austere
Pursuit of freedom. The old appetite
Undid my will; for, struggle as I might,
She was more dear to me than truth was dear.

Till God, of His mercy, through this falsehood shot
An inextinguishable lightning-flash
Into the body of my soul's disgrace,
From eyes that blotted out that darkling face
In such a blaze of life as did abash
The ghost that was my mate—and now is not.

## III. Guardianship

SHE came who joined my spirit to her own.
Out of the vortex of my shame, she caught
The glory that myself had set at naught;
It leapt to her and victory was begun.
Ay, but it was not in the moment won!
Year after year, the habit of my thought
Tangled my will with weakness, as it sought
(But covertly) the evil overthrown.
Yet being joined with her, my soul knew now
The miracle of her life fulfilling mine,
And should I go beg of a ghost for good?
Her body taught me truth. I understood
The mystic touch of the spirit—the sure fine
Guiding that governs life I know not how.

## The Haunted Man's Petition

"DEAR, leave me not to-night! The devils whom
Once I invited haunt about my bed.
I can no longer pray: do you instead
Be near me and dispel the hideous gloom
That creeps upon me. Garrison the room
With your strong presence, and I will not dread
These, that too often in my sleep, have bled
And left me impotent against my doom.
I would not have you wake night-long to keep
Vigil for me against the insidious crew,
But give me some compelling word to close
My body's gate against my spirit's foes;
Some word of yours my body to endue
With virtue after you are fallen asleep."

## Her Defiance

"FOUL, disembodied shapes of evil haunt
The room where sin drew them once down to feast
Upon its carrion. Is there now a least
Signal of fear to say their shadows daunt
The sojourner, no other sign they want
But draw anigh as though some power had ceased
To hold them from him. Suddenly released,
Swoop upon swoop, they crowd him close.—Avaunt,
Ye spectral vultures! Here is nothing dead
For you to glut your beaks on!—He may sleep
Safe even here. I have the power to break
The spells of memory: with my passion make
This room impregnable: against you keep
Watch, and upon my faith pillow his head."

## Her Freedom

YOUR presence puts my enemies to flight:
They cannot bear the radiancy you fling
About me. Every surreptitious thing
Escapes out of your dear but dreadful light.
Yet even your strong presence cannot quite
Emancipate me, nor my spirit bring
Forth of its ultimate delivering—
That is mine own inalienable right.
You came not nigh to cheat me of my throes:
Mine must the birth-pangs of my spirit be:
Its bringing forth and utterance, mine own.
But yet I cannot compass these alone:
Your freedom, though it cannot set me free,
Is like a comrade in a press of foes.

## Individualism

I GO not forth alone to Freedom's wars,
But among comrades. God, that is my friend,
Entrusts me with his purse-strings ; I expend
Of the infinite resources of the stars
Sufficient. The mysterious Earth unbars
Her secret gates to me. Death bids me wend
By what strange path I must to attain my end :—
My spirit hath divine auxiliars.
And yet alone of men needs must I stand
Upon my purpose, with a heart inured
To patience and against success assured.
Yea, though the Holy Ones be of my band,
My sovereign spirit is not to be lured
To obey other than its own command.

## A Free Woman

THIS woman was not meant
  A man's desire to bless :
She is compact of discontent
And soul-disturbing eagerness :
On joys we never did possess
Her womanhood is bent :
She cannot be the wife
Of any else than Life.

No mind hath she to mate
Our love, that makes the proffer :
For only Life Himself seems great
Enough to be all-worthy of her,—
Minish her nothing, bid her suffer
No loss in her estate :—
Hers—who is fain to give
His splendour leave to live !

Our love too narrow is
Her life to comprehend :
Needs must her heart take liberties
With any that would be her friend ;
And thus his lack of love amend
By living as she please,
Till all her discontent
Be utterly forspent.

All we had boasted dies,
Confessing itself null
Beneath her joy-expectant eyes:
And how incontinently dull
Our pride is grown, how pitiful
Our labour and its prize!
Yet doth she not condemn,
But only look on them.

She is the enemy
Of our accomplished good,
Our comfort and complacency:
Her unenfranchised womanhood
Laughs at our freedom; and it would
Methinks have set us free,
For it is nearer far
To manhood than we are.

## Comrade-love

THE world would either bid me turn and go
Straightway from you, or bid me love you so
As, when you welcome me, lifting your lids,
I cannot, for the love of you forbids.
Nor do these voices only cry without ;
Always within my brain the paths of doubt
Are ready trodden for my will to take ;
While, in the untrodden, many a treacherous snake
Lurks for the venturer, hissing him aback
From the rough country to the well-worn track.
O, if to love you truly seem but mad,
And sober prudence to be good or bad
Precipitately—(both the roads are plain,
This way or that !)—if it be worse than vain
To guess how, through the heather, we may fare,
Or where arrive together—yet I care
For this one only thing, that you and I,
Loving each other in our own way, try
Life's new experiment, refusing less
Of Fate than scope wherein to prove what is
This Stranger to the ways of fear—this Faith
Defiant, that makes Death himself a wraith—
This Comrade-love that claims of me and you
That to his living presence we be true.

## Freeman's Virtue

NOT even for his children's bread to sell
 The body of his manhood: to engage
His liberty for no employer's wage:
To worship no man: to let no man tell
His free soul what it must: aye to repel,
With all his spirit's pure indignant rage,
The insidious kindnesses of patronage,
The favours that content a soul with Hell:
To give to every man his honest due,
To pull a servile forelock, lout and say
" My Lord," to none—such is the freeman's vow.
And such another shines upon your brow,
Ye women, who henceforward will obey
Nothing that tyrannises over you!

## Women Militant

THESE, for the love of freedom, hazard all:
They condescend to hatred; they deny
What erst they knew of womanhood to try,
Shuddering, the ugly tools of the arsenal
Of violence, if so they may appal
Our world, beholding with a startled eye
How all its vaunted justice twists awry
Making of gentleness a criminal.
They hazard all for freedom: it may be
Fondly, but yet they hazard all for that,
While in our prudent comfortable way
We shake our heads—"Thank God, we are not as they
Who give their honour to be hooted at
And pawn their souls to purchase liberty!"

II

We also, for the love of Freedom, we
Abandoning obedience, hazarding
Our souls on every stroke of the struggle, fling
Challenges to whatever power may be
Betwixt the spirit of man and liberty.
Nay, whatever the sacred-seeming thing
Bidding us or forbidding, we must bring
Among men all the peril of being free:—
Peril of a liberty that dares refuse
Faith and obedience to any but the Guide
Of life, its spirit, who, with the Absolute
Ever communes: Freedom that may commute
This for no easier service, nor may hide
Cloistered, and from the world itself excuse.

## Piracy

"IT is your love-making we hate you for—
We, underneath whose hearts the awful tide
Calls with a summons not to be denied
Withdrawing to the abysses from the shore.
If Love were but a pool whereinto pour
Passionate waters that again subside—!
But it is all the ocean, vasty-wide
As Death outspreading its untrodden floor.
And shall we embark a pilot whose false eyes
Answer the syren's of the lurking reef
In the sea's margin?—laughingly disguise
As Love the treachery that brings to grief
Far voyagers?—and with obsequious care
Run them upon the rocks to rob them there?"

## To a Woman

TO escape at last from men, and what they would
Of you; to live as the dead may, happily
Possessed of none and none possessing; be
Complete in your unshackled womanhood,
Thwarted no more, no more misunderstood
Refusing or consenting:—to be free
With an indisputable liberty!—
Ah, but for you there is this better good:—
To awaken, not the dull possessive heat
Of passion, but its liberating fire
That looses glory bedded in the clod:
To free in a man the sex-imprisoned god,
Who only can be freed by your desire
For a Freedom that shall make your own complete.

## Your Alternative

IF you withdraw your spirit from your face
  Let me not meet its dark alternative
Looking out of your eyes, happy to live
At last in such an honourable place
And fill it with that strange orchideous grace
That is love's parasite, cunning to give
Naught to the strength its beauty feeds on, if
Only he carry her in his embrace.
But if, imperative, he hold her fast,
She poisons him with her bright bitter scorn.—
Dear face !—O, never leave it quite forlorn
Of my true comrade's presence, lest aghast
I see therein the Creature, all afire
To steal between you and my heart's desire.

## Body-changing

WHEN you permit oppression to bequeathe
  To you his lethal legacy of hate,
You shut upon my love an iron grate,
And with a prison cell my spirit sheathe.
I am so near you, that around me wreathe
The thick coils of your anger against Fate,
Your deadly thoughts of men. I suffocate
In these grey emanations that you breathe.
When you retort with bitterness on the men
That do you wrong, and of your passion make
A poisoned dagger for them, and a curse,
You murder them that love you ; you reverse
The meaning of your womanhood : you take
The night-shape of the werewolf on you then.

## To Arms!

THIS passion is too loud for me: it beats
 Its dinning drum in a too-narrow room;
It loads my throbbing pulses till they boom
Heavily as a bell that fills the streets
Of a city with alarum and repeats,
Clamouring, a monotony of doom
That covers all the face of day with gloom;
Until the burghers, spurning old defeats,
Fling wide the gate and sally against the foe.
So am I filled with rumour and my brain
Reels with the bellowing of this sleepless bell,
Till I can fling some gate open and go
Forth of myself to conquer or be slain,
To achieve Heaven or stagger down to Hell.

## The Forest

NEEDS must we follow, hardly may we find,
Our way athwart this dark and thicket wood
Wherein it wanders, underneath a hood
Anciently woven of desires that blind
Bewildered eyes with shadowy undefined
Promise and threat of evil and of good
Beyond whatever may be understood
Of glory and disaster to mankind.
But groping through these jungled loves of men
And women, they that go with faithful feet
May issue on an open upland range,
A land wherein Love's passionate interchange
Is no more haunted by the obscure deceit
That is the forest's treacherous denizen.

## Upland Ways

COMRADE, in whose dear company I found
My way amid the sensual gloom—that thins
Before us now, for now the wood begins
To fail, and the open sunlight to abound,—
Forgive me, if I follow but as a hound
While you lead on across the windy whins
And craggy shoulders,—if my going twins
With yours no more, upon this upland ground,
But follows, looking often back, away
Over that darkling forest that we leave,
As though I left its shadows with regret
And would reproach you for withdrawing; yet
I also would those sunny heights achieve
Following your brave spirit as I may.

## Self-utterance

UNTIL you came to me with magic eyes
My unimagined spirit to evoke,
I knew not who I was: until you broke
My dream of what I was with the surprise
Of love, I had made but random vague replies
To Life's large question. But you struck a stroke
Set all my metal ringing, and I spoke
Myself out suddenly from my disguise.
Your eyes were full of dark magnetic light
Beyond the spectrum's narrow gauge: they drew
My secret being forth into their view:
With passionately unrelenting sight
You bade me know my spirit's mortal plight:
—I had not known my spirit but for you.

## The Stranger

THE new-born spirit seems too sensitive
For this tumultuous world of friends and foes,
Who batter with their hurly-burly blows
Rudely each other, give them and forgive
Indifferently. How may 't learn to live
Amid this violence unless 't impose
A mask upon its gentleness, and close
Somewhat its eyes all-seeing? Fugitive
From men, often to the unpeopled kind
Wilderness it withdraws, where it may bask
Unspied-on in the sun, and simply be
Itself—that little child of Deity
Whose world-transforming gaze we mortals mask,
And would, in self-protecting prudence, blind!

## False Economy

IN vain the spirit in your body dwelt,
 Your shrewd brain never apprehending it,
Although your curiosity would sit
And question every itch the senses felt :
As for your good practical soul that dealt
In duty, and could find no benefit
In mere delight, he never would admit
The stranger's co-existence in your pelt.
" Spirit ?—what place is left for that in the whole
Complex economy of our design ? "
—So its economy is come to naught,
For nothing issues from your honest thought
And dutifulness, save the Thing divine
Shaking them off to find Itself a soul.

# The Last of April

## A Dialogue

" SUNSHINE without, and a dark house within.
Windows blinded and shuttered, and doors fast
Upon the finery that in days past
Was gay enough, but now is fading thin.—"
" Sunshine ? Nay, 'tis the wind whines to come in
At every crack : the light is overcast :
The scud flies galloping upon the blast
And hurls each rain-plash like a javelin.
Ay, and to-night 's Walpurgis'. Through the dark,
Mischief'll knock at the door and the witch-rout
Rattle it ! "—" Till a little before day :
But then it is the morrow of the May,
And all the wakeful wondering world without
Goes forth to bring Her in with singing. Hark ! "—

## October Violet

APRIL hath violets, but not like these
Ethereal blossoms of the October days
That, while a glory walks the woodland ways,
Fill all the intervals between the trees
With pools of vapour, purple as the seas
That hold the isles of spice. Therein to gaze
Is to forget the shadowy pines, and praise
Wholeheartedly that Master of mysteries
Who taught them how, out of the light, to take
This wonder, and therein to steep the hours
Until they are become immortal flowers,
Breathe spiritual odours, and awake
Some virtue of the spirit that is yet
More perfect and essential violet.

## Forbid not Love

FORBID not Love, though unrelentingly
He break among your playfellows and seem
An enemy to all your merry dream,
Bent upon deeds, with sombre tragedy
In his inevitable eyes that see,
Lit up within your soul by some clear beam
Of vision, amid its gaiety, its supreme
Famine of spirit and dire necessity.
Forbid him not, as though he came to urge
Another life upon you than your own,
And passionately engraft it upon yours:
Out of his visionary gaze emerge
Your need and its fulfilling—the unknown
Promise Life made you—for it still endures.

## Blind Sight

DEAR eyes, that with insatiable gaze
Drink the world's wonder in, yet is your sight
A sort of blindness! In your heart's despite,
That would fain welcome all the night-and-day's
Glory, there is some veil that disobeys,
Denying whom the spirit doth invite—
Dear eyes, that seem wide open to the light
And yet are closed against its finer rays.
As a clear window-pane is yet opaque
To light's invisible radiance, so against
Your limpid gaze the ultra-violet beam
Of mystic light glances, and seems to break
Itself as on a rock, and you are fenced
From living life and compassed in a dream.

## Companionship

WHEN I am with my dear I dispossess
Some nullity that held me, being alone:
Some god in me, that I had never known
Without her, quickens in me to caress
The joy that had been hid in her unless
My lips had giv'n it language, my glance shewn
To hers its gladness: secrets all our own
Only to one another we confess.
Even so, my spirit in the innermost
Had held his silence and been dumb to me,
If I had doubted God and failed of prayer.
If God had not revealed my deity
My freedom had remained a hollow boast
Shouting against confusion and despair.

## Man to Woman

PRAY God, you understand and set me free!
My spirit struggles toward you: do not hear
Only the stammering tongue that cannot clear
Its meaning, and is ready to agree
In its confusion with Love's enemy.
Seize not on its mere folly. Bid your ear
So listen that my tongue may persevere
Till all the truth be told 'twixt you and me.
My obscure passion never can find speech,
So body-bound and so ambiguous,
So prone it is to utter shame for praise—
If you, misunderstanding, keep it thus,
I must be half a beast until you raise
My manhood to a life beyond my reach.

## Bee-bread

WHEN passion, grown to worship, strips me bare
  Before you of my vanity and greed,
Even my body becomes bread to feed
Your spirit, would you take its proffered fare.
However honeycombed it be with lair
And lurking-place of tyrannies that breed
Under the cover of its every need,
I beg you now no longer to beware.
For when your spirit draws, as flame to flame,
Mine to you,—through the dancing atomies
That are my body, a celestial
Power like a sunbeam shines, and changes all
Its substance into joy:—even my shame
Is become lily-pollen and bread of bees.

## Temptation

THOUGH I am humble yet my love is proud,
That asks you for no favour, nor will swerve
From its high enterprise aside to serve
Even your pleasure. My desire was loud,
My love forbade its pleading : I was vowed
To an absorbing task, and every nerve
Strained to it. Little praise should I deserve
If to your momentary will I bowed.
Your spirit called me passionately to love
Your mind and body clean of cloudy bars :
To give you all God's radiant heights above,—
The freedom of the constellated stars :
Bade me beget—and she would bring to birth,
Yea, in your body !—freedom on the Earth.

## Love's Proxy

IT is not merely I that love you ! He
Who tunes the wild worlds to His will, makes shift
With these my lips to offer you His gift.
The words I try to tell you come to me
Out of the bosom of eternity.
Not at a random shooting, straight and swift
To you they fly ; and as I tell them, lift
My passion on their light-winged urgency.
The nightingale himself is but a bird,
And yet he sings a passion that abides.
It is not I, but Love that would be heard,
Full-bosomed as the moon-enamoured tides.
Now if you hearken, 'tis not to my word
But to the ocean rhythm on which it rides.

## Sad Summer

IT is not howling Winter that is sad,
but Summer without tears:
She breathes a melancholy air
among her damask hangings,
As though their bridal promise were become
but ashes in her mouth:
As though the merry-making hours,
Whose tresses are long tangled yellow sunbeams,
had left her discontent.

It is not Old Age that is sad
but Middle Age, that weeps not.
Her beauty in its strength is become sullen,
Her red mouth dissolute—
as though with barren kisses:
Her eyes look forth unsurely.
Of the myriad hands, whose beckonings they answer,
None ever bade her sure-eyed maidenhood
forth of its dungeon.
The merry-making of Earth's children
Calling to her that she should beat out music
For fairy feet to dance to,
Reaches not the deep-slumbering chord to stir it
out of its silence.

## Filial Piety

WOULD you have him return and remain
    In the place where your failure abides,
You whom he loves, and is fain
To ease, and to comfort your pain ?
Or shall he go forth with great strides
Towards that light afar off you, that hides
The goal that you failed of attaining—
That he too must fail of, remaining—?

## Childish Folk

THESE are but half-born that their mothers bear :
Manhood and womanhood lie yet asleep
Within them, and forevermore will keep
Mere silence, or but babble, unaware
Of what it means to master life's despair—
Will yet remain among the herded sheep,—
Unless through other gates of birth they creep
Into the world wherein we do and dare.
But who shall bring their spirits forth again ?
Deliver them, with all the pangs of love ?
Watch over them, till that which dreams awake ?—
It wakens not : and in default thereof
They wander aimlessly, till Law and Pain
Catch them among their iron wheels, and break.

## To Tolstoi

YOU bestowed speech on the inarticulate noise
Of the world's woe, that we would fain deny
For terror of it, would dissolve its sigh
In silence, would make merry and rejoice
Again ; but your inevitable voice
Insisted, and we saw our folly lie
How pitifully bare to the stern sky,
And there was no distraction in our toys.
Fevered with the world's woe, you might not be
Its healer, nor escape it, though you strove
To win respite of anguish in some place
Of quietness. But now shall Death efface
The horror from your vision, and the love
Of every faithful lover set you free.

## To Friedrich Nietzsche

I

MOUNTAIN-SPIRIT of pride, nursed i' the dark
Of eagly crags that outline the dread verge
Of thought, and with relentless chisel urge
Vertiginous jaggy facts against the stark
Light of the zenith !—no glad meadow-lark
That spirals up the summer air to merge
His song in the sunlight—like a demiurge
Promethean, you blaze on your peak, to mark
Man's summit of aloofness from his kind !
Drunken with light disastrous, you demand
Only more light ! In that intense inane
I watch you, Dionysian, and my brain
Reels backward to its nest in the kind land
Of meadows and the shadow-weaving wind.

II

Brother of common men, proudly you chose
With tragic will the solitary path :
You flung them lightning menaces of wrath
As never might the fiercest of their foes.
You scorned their lovers. You were one of those
Who keep, even against Truth, terrible troth
With your own faith : the shame and glory both
Blaze in your purpose and their flames oppose.
In scorn of lovers you unscabbarded
The light that Love should carry : that fierce blade
Pitiless-flashing, naked as the sun,
That sears the gaze of whoso looks thereon,
You drew on us, and courted the reward
Of them that, taking, perish with the sword.

("Eternal Recurrence")

III

When on your crags you had bound your eagle soul
Within the circle of that serpent thought
That fanged into itself:—when you had taught
Your faith renunciation,—given control
To the creeping wisdom of the brain—there stole
Into your heart a divine fire that fought
Against the fatal trap wherein self-caught
You maimed the spirit that had else been whole.
Then in your veins the dancing pulse that is
The rhythm of liberation, the wild joy
Of truth incredible, began to mock
At your imprisoned will. Upon your rock
You reeled, and now would dizzily employ
Your great wings, but the snake impinioned these.

IV

The magic syllables of power deprave
The mouth that tells them to the world amiss:
Their utterance closes up his heart from bliss,
Thwarts him of truth, makes him illusion's slave.
Your spirit was bound: to other powers you gave
Enfranchisement of speech, but unto this
Your spirit, dumbness. Round you now the Abyss
Deepens, and its unmeaning echoes rave.
Half-truths you cried that still the truth suppressed
The Deity that is ours—the whole divine
Purpose of being—in you was dispossessed:
Wherefore your vision is vain, and you at grips
Vainly with forms insidiously malign,
Vainly your challenge shouting at your lips.

## To Meredith

EARTH-LOVER, underfoot you went secure,
Your faith inwrought with no vanishing myth
But with the purpose that builds up the pith
Of spiritual forms made to endure
Amid whatever fire, being of the pure
Asbestos that rejoices in the breath
Of passion, whom the wizard hand of Death
Shall gather and their beauty not obscure.
For this is Freedom, this is Earth a-flower,
Yea-saying to the spirit that is Man!
O you, who striving, stretched thought that it might
Be not untrue to the soul's infinite,
Urge still the strife until our thinking can
Embrace the joy-emancipating power!

## To Napoleon

YOUR glory is all over. Now, being dead,
You see it for some pale far-away cloud
The gales of freedom (that you disallowed
Yesterday) chase and winnow. Now abed
You crouch. Babe-like you whimper at the dread
Echo of what was your own voice, and cowed
Earth with its bellowing. Now, pucker-browed
You hear it, and you seek to hide your head
In some kind woman's breast that might be strong
Against the horror of this helplessness
That ruled the world and was Napoleon.
For all your might is with your glory gone:
There is not left so much as would redress
Unaided any tittle of its wrong.

## Væ Victis!

WHEN you begin to cry
*Væ victis!* then I know
Whose voice it is, and why
You are my foe!

For this foulest of cries
Out of the heart of Hell,
Gathers all infamies
Into its yell.

" Woe to the conquered! "—Hark,
You that, in any host,
Raise the cry,—how the dark,
To its nethermost

Blackness, reverberates!
How the whole horrible pack
Of aye-insatiate hates
Clamours it back,

Acclaiming you!—And you,
Whatso the sacred name
You carry, but imbrue
Its glory in shame!

## Of Trees

*The Damson*

FEBRUARY comes with friendly face, and the birds begin singing in the Damson.
Lying at my window I watch them in the tracery of the boughs,
Their trills coming to me in little gusts through the open casement.

*Winter Beeches*

Beech-trees that draw, with clean skill deliberate
These lines as with a pencil on the clear light,
Some voiceless need of the spirit within me finds
In the quietude inscribed by you upon this luminous wide page
Its perfect rhythm.

*The Pines*

Wet, south-west gale, tumultuous, bough-snapper!
Weighting the branches with rain to take them at a disadvantage,
Rough playfellow, from whose grip
The pine-stems gleam all strange and wonderful,
Luminous as a Chinese silk with green and sulphur lichen, and shining with bright nimble drops,
They do not grudge you a few broken branches!

## The Aspen-tree

WORDS, words, will you dance for me
  As the leaflets trip it on the aspen-tree
Up against the morning light ?
  Dance, dance with the scatter of rain
When the wind comes a-singing up from the plain
To wander in the woods all night,
  And I must forth from my cottage door
To hearken how, on the crispy floor,
Under the dark where the branches meet,
Dances the pit-a-pat-pat of feet— ?

Now comes up the sun on the lea,
Wakening the leaves of the aspen-tree
To begin their twinkling play :
  And here's a rhythm that I have caught
Somewhere, wandering in my thought,
Will make you merry as they :
  Will wake you all, and set you a-beat,
Twinkling with your little black feet
Upon so fine an ivory floor
That, though you have never danced before
You will dance now, with the pattering glee
Of raindrops in the wood,
Till everyone comes forth to see
What is in so mad a mood !
Words, words : you shall dance for me
As the leaflets trip it on the aspen-tree.

## The Scolding Squirrel

SQUIRREL, squirrel up in the tree,
Do not stamp and scold at me,
Although beneath your pine I sit
And also make a feast of it.

Can it not occur to you
That this man is hungry too,
And for quite another meat
Than the kind that squirrels eat ?

Squirrel, squirrel up in the tree,
While you jerk that tail at me
I mock at you and blithely dine
On the other fruit of the pine ;

Whereupon my heart grows whole,
Plump and nonchalant my soul ;
My replenished nerves forget
To torment me with their fret.

All about me for my food
Drops the wisdom of the wood :
What a thousand pine-trees think
Is distilled to be my drink :

I can never have enough
Of the wandering rhythm of
The West-wind surging overhead—
Saying, saying, never said :

An ever-living tide of mirth
That flows for aye about the Earth
Begins to sing its song in me,
Squirrel, underneath your tree.

Wherefore, it is of no avail
For you to stamp and jerk your tail
Fed of the self-same woods I too
Stutter and scribble back at you !

## The Beechwood in March

NOT only simple things and good
Are heard and harboured in the wood,
For I am sure the Lady Beech
Hath wicked wiles within her reach
And something of the serpent's guile
Lurks in the lady's lovely smile,
—For which, indeed, we love her more
And find her lovelier than before.

As every woman is a witch,
So there's no beech-tree but doth stitch
Her gleaming phosphorescent vest
That fits so featly to her breast,
With subtle surreptitious grace :—
Those hundred roots that interlace
Into a tangle weird and green,
Methinks they ought not to be seen
Working their witch-craft :—I would wonder
To see the conies dwell thereunder
But that they have the guarantee
Of their extreme simplicity.

For once, when I was on the hill
In middle March, taking my fill
Of idleness, when all the air
Was grey with rain, I grew aware
Of unimagined mysteries
Transacted by the slender trees.

O, they were very tall and slim
And strangely nippled, and a dim
Milkily coloured light they shed
About them, flushing pallid red
From the copper floor: wan, waxenly,
Their glimmering presence haunted me.

They stole with a usurping grace
Possessive, all the common space,
That none besides might dwell therein—
Except the cony-folk, the thin
Lichen that gossamers their skin,
And the green vivid moss that sips
The dripping of their finger-tips.

On the edge of a pool I stood:
One beech-tree leaned out of the wood
And kneeled upon the water's brink,
Neither to gaze in it nor drink,
But in its mirror to confess
That quintessential wickedness
Which darkles, visible to me,
About divine virginity.

For I perceive that Dian ever
Anew replenishes her quiver
Of sudden-slaying shafts that smite
The foolish lover of delight
Amid his sentimental dream
Of girlish joys, with the fierce gleam
Of joys that were the overthrow
Of mighty spirits who long ago

Worshipped her, and with strange desire
Were stricken, while her ghostly fire
(Moon-cold that is) of chastity
Seduced them from the mastery
Of noon-day splendours, to essay
Adventures sybilline and grey,
Outreaching from a certain good
To wonders whispered in the wood
By the bewitchèd loveliness
They loved and never might possess.

I left the pool, and to and fro
On the naked ground began to go,
Knowing how all the wood was fraught
With silence perilously wrought
Of many a man-rejected thing :—

I heard again the Pan-pipes sing
The bubbling ecstasy of earth,
With clear unintermitted mirth :
I heard the music, elder than
All the philosophy of man,
Laughing within my soul to see
Beauty so delicately free
To work her mischief and to play
Exquisitely with our clay.

I deem—enamoured of the Sun,
Not of her myriad and one
Creatures—that Earth, with eager breath,
Recks little of their life and death :—
Is not her bosom over-rife
With the tumultuous births of life ?—

But she, with that relentless smile
Leonardo painted, broods, the while
She images with mighty will
The forms that shall her dream fulfil.

However dear and gentle seem
The eyes of Mother Earth a-dream,
Yet may you glimpse within those eyes
The unmistakable surmise
Of that old savage lioness
She is for all her gentleness.
It is fierce freedom that she gives
To every gentle life that lives—
Freedom to kill with tooth and wit
Whatever being hinders it:
And upon him that hinders her,
The smile she casts is sinister.

Complacent he: little he knows
The passion of her heart that flows
Throughout the strangely permanent
Pattern of her world-intent;
Or how the secret of her plan
Was hid in him ere he began
To thwart her and presume to be
Less splendid than the destiny,
Smiling, she fashioned in his flesh:

And still she smiles while, in the mesh
Of his own being, grows entangled
The mean, profane, the strangely-fangled
Fancy of life wherewith he tried
If she would not be satisfied.

While there be simple things—and good
To eat—that harbour in the wood,
Menacing images galore
Pass to and fro upon its floor
With the dread might of oaths forsworn,
Dreams unbegotten, babes unborn.

## Not Pity

ONLY faith's doubt-dispelling eyes discern
Life's secret virtue : only they are sure
Of the spirit hidden in this dim obscure
Humanity. Amid the dark they burn
Flame-clear, and ever to their brightness turn
The hungry eyes of the nations, that endure
The substitutes of statecraft for that pure
Diet of Freedom after which they yearn.
Out of those hungry eyes the living truth
Flashes, if we had wisdom to behold
Man's meaning : and to whomso Love imparts
The vision, there are no more feeble hearts
Of pitiful human creatures, but the untold
Virility of an unexpended youth.

## Pitiless Love

WHO loves, he pities not nor condescends.
Then God, the river-head of love, can feel
No pity for beings wrought out of a steel
That in its ever-living spirit blends
The elements of endurance ; that makes friends
With stern occasion ; that is apt to deal
With all of life, and of its stuff reveal
The purpose, using it for mystic ends.
Through the incalculable æons, Man
Was not designed so masterly to be
The creature of God's pity, but the key
To unlock power, and realise the plan
Whereon, from the far all-beginning, ran
Love's life-creating purpose, pitilessly.

## Freedom's Flesh

WE that build Freedom's body cell by cell
To outlive these our own when they are gone
Into the dust, choose that to labour on
Which is most stubborn and intractable ;—
Our elemental passions that rebel
Against all governance,—these one by one
We build into that living Parthenon
Wherein the spirit of Liberty shall dwell.
Not out of eunuchries and sterile wombs,
Not out of yearnings impotent enough—
Dead-white enough, to fashion into tombs—
Is freedom's body wrought, that claims the stuff
Of life's begetting, the rebellious fierce
Necessities that through our dreaming pierce.

## Body, Soul, and Spirit*

FREEDOM is of the spirit, and the flesh
Rejoices in it, fashioned for the use
Of spirit. But 'tis easy to seduce
Those eyes unsure, with pleasurable trash;
To catch and hold the body in a mesh
Woven of its senses, till it grow obtuse
To the spirit that, withdrawing, waits recluse
Within it, until life begins afresh.
That body is desire's chameleon—
Liveried now in pleasure now in pain—
Wherein the spirit, that is freedom, lies
Imprisoned. Though the soul do tyrannise
Over the flesh, the flesh revolts in vain.
The body hath no freedom of its own.

Freedom is of the spirit and its name
Is holy, for it makes the being whole
That else is sundered. For the unfree soul
Separates body and spirit, and thinks it shame
If the wild beautiful body become not tame
And all obsequious to his control.
Himself unfree, he is proud and masterful,
While the flesh pants after the spirit's flame.
But when the soul, that contemplates and feels
And chooses, wonderingly apprehends
The secret that within a man is hidden,
That wild one is no longer cursed and chidden;
Then with the body would the soul make friends
And know the living light that each conceals.

* "Soul" stands for the conscious individuality, "spirit" for the immortal person.

## Universal Speech

THEY only unto Freedom have attained
In whom it is become more than a cry
Wherewith the aspiring heart may prophesy
Things seen afar: who have the franchise gained
Of the dumb body that held the soul enchained
To hungers that it might not satisfy.
They that are free the body's tongue untie
To utter words it cannot apprehend.
These teach the world again that poet-speech
Of Incarnation after which we long:
The spirit breathes in all their flesh to tell
Life's wonder; and behold, a miracle!—
Amid the Babel-tongued bewildered throng
This Word is in the dialect of each.

## Man's Word

FREEDOM!—Our speech without it is the dumb
Chatter of parrot sounds that imitate
The living thought they are not. All our prate
Is profitless. We had as well be mum
As that this gibbering of the brain should come
Forth of our lips, with its emasculate
Mockery of the power that dwells innate
In us and is our manhood's maximum.
Our rhetoric is null until the day
When the sheer truth we are struggles to speech;
When, wrestling with the obstinate thick tongue
That seemed so glib those parrot words among,
It makes our dull articulation reach
Freedom, the Word of God that Man must say.

## The Slave

MY whole life long I've tried to be
As other folk expected me:
Meekly and lovingly I've sought
To think as other people thought:
In other people's paths I've trod,
And served the other people's god.
Upon my feet, upon my knees,
My holy office was to please:
For who, in Heaven's name, was I
The other people to deny?

And when to-day somebody's eyes
Suddenly did a self surprise
That struggled fearfully to be
Nobody in the world but me,
So shocked I was, I bade it then
Never to venture out again
—So different from other men!

## Thwarted

I GRUDGE against the people who
Loved me and would not let me do
The eager mischief that I would,
Because, they said, it was not good.

For had I done the thing I would,
Haply the doing had been good :
I might have known the thing I did :
But they have kept its meaning hid.

And all my spirit was encased
In ignorance: I could not taste
The fruit that should have ripened on
The thwarted deed I had not done.

Desire grew sullen that was hot :
Still though I longed, I did it not :
Until at last I grew into
The mischief that I did not do.

# Joy

## The Spectator's View

DANCERS, elvishly limbed for beauty's doing,
Dancing you cry magical things,
No word can or music,
To the sleeper asleep in my body,
Calling him up
Out of the deep of his slumber to tenant me—
Joy.

But elvish ones, I am prudence, black-coated,
And who,—wild-gleaming, brown limbs dithyrambic,
Who is this Joy ?

Silly joy ! When I think how weary my father,
My mother sad-browed, disappointed, and I
Dutifulness—
Who is this in my body cries " Joy ! " ?

To cherish, console ; pile on each other the hours,
And make ready to-morrow ; obey
Need and necessity—O silly joy,
Mischievous dancers !

Before day begins with its task
I love to behold you. Could I forget
What you have learned never,
I'd dance.
Joy, how it leaps in me !
Sobbing as though in me, too, delight
Bodily cried, and I bade her be silent.

(Prisoner, if I should loose you,
You could not dance! Old, blink-eyed, dull,
Awkwardness, now
It is too late.)

If I were not a middle-aged man,
Children, I'd join you. But quick
Cobbolds and pucks, perceive,—folly and madness!-
I have no feet for it!
Crank in the knees and wind, I was not made for it-
Joy.

As to you, little young butterfly-folk,
I'd not have you sobered in schools!—No! I'd sit
Pursily here on my cushion, a caterpillar
On a velvety leaf, and applaud you,—recalling
Long agos when I too could have danced.

## Deadly Sin

SOMETHING, I know not what, an elfish thing
Within me, cries and will not let me rest,
But beats against my breast
That I should let it dance and sing,
That I should give it liberty.

Something—nay, ask me not,
Maybe I knew it once, and have forgot—
Something within, feels out for hands and feet
To dance, but mine are numb.
Something prisoned within me flutters, something dumb
Struggles to find if it were but the bleat
Of a meadow-lamb.

Fool that I am!
I have taken
And bound against dancing this body of mine:
My lips have forsaken
The divine
Vocation of babbling forth praise.
I am the prison of my joy,—
A sedate man forgetting the days
That once I was a mere wild boy.

Will ever now the song come back to me
I dream and dare not begin ?
Though I repent
Will ever Life pardon this sin—
To have refused
Me to the joy that would have used
My body as it was meant,
And set it free ?

## To George Fox

I LOVE, dear lion-hearted George, to hear
Thy voice reverberate among the hills
Of Heaven in those godly thunder-peals
That shatter all the torpor in the air:
I love to see thee run the Quaker deer,
When they come gently flocking to the sills
Of freedom and thou threatenest them with thrills
Of ecstasy and the aspect of God's fear.
But if thou wouldst make holiday!—wouldst set
Thy sober feet to skipping: tune thy voice
Amid the nonsense of the lambs that leap
Upon the heavenly hillocks (there are met
Strange playfellows!)—how God it would rejoice
To see His lion frisk among His sheep!

## Injunction

IT is no use pricking up your ears at every step:
Neither the postman nor the telegraph boy will bring
you that for which you wait.
They will bring you news, perhaps: but not that for
which you wait.
And you must go on waiting while you prick your ears
up at their footstep.
For the Divine Companion requires all your attention,
and He is not there.
He is here in the deep quiet of your heart: the quiet
that abides and is content because of Him.

Seek then for quietness:
By your desire, withdraw yourself from the ever-alertness
of your brain, the imprisonment of sick nerves:
Partake of the deep life within your soul:
Turn now away from your delight in that which is
without, and in the play of your powers:
Give yourself now to this that waits;
That clamours not nor insists, but waits—
Knowledge of Him and guiding love of Him.

## Morning Invocation

SPIRIT, with wonder interwrought
Beyond the uttermost of thought—
Spirit, inwoven with the Past
Age after age—mountainy vast
Vista, that still the source of thee
Leaves hidden in a mystery—
Spirit, sensitive to respond
To the future and the yet-beyond :
To whom the angels of the air
Thine own authority declare,
And bid thee promulgate decrees
For those obedient centuries
Unborn, that shall discover far
Over their heads thy guiding star :—
Spirit, proclaim in me to-day
Such of thy wonder as I may
Articulate : fill up this span
Of manhood with that Son of Man
In whom my body hath a part,
Whom thou that art my spirit, art :
That splendour that continues dim
Divided between me and him—!

## Evocation

COME, spirit, from your hiding and retreat!
I have opened every door; I have taken away
Each barrier and partition, that you may
Move in me now with free unhindered feet.
While you withdraw, my life is incomplete
In every part: whatever word I say
Fails on its errand; all my deeds betray
The empty kernel of my soul's deceit.
—Most my desire, that knows not, missing you,
What path to follow: to and fro it beats,
Vain as a rattle in a baby's clutch.—
All that I am or hope to be entreats
You to possess it, and yourself endue
With its habiliment of thought and touch.

## Ultimate Act

I HAD rather cut man's purpose deeper than
Achieving it be crowned a conqueror:
To will divinely is to accomplish more
Than a mere deed: it fills anew the wan
Aspect of life with blood: it draws upon
Sources beyond the common reach and lore
Of mortals, to replenish at its core
The God-impassioned energy of man.
And therewith all the worlds of deed and thought
Quicken again with meaning—pulse and thrill
With Deity—that had forgot His touch.
There is not any act avails so much
As this invisible wedding of the will
With Life,—yea, though it seem to accomplish naught.

## Prayer

WHAT inspiration of pure power is this
I draw through all the passages and doors
Of being?—this transfusing fire that pours
Into my spirit's chamber with a bliss
More intimate than any nuptial kiss?
What is this ultimate of intercourse
Surcharging me with procreative force—
This rapture of love, abyss beyond abyss?
Now is the contradiction of my will,
Its turbulent confusion, ionised
To carry light: it grows pellucid clear:
Till all the vibrant particles of fear
And vehicles of lust have realised
The purpose they are chosen to fulfil.

## God's Glory

I HAVE comrades in the unseen, invisible companions,
Who at the divine cry, come to my aid:
I do not have to summon them by name;
If I but cry the watchword, they come seconding me:

If I but pray,
All the infinite host of strong and faithful ones
Who call themselves by the divine name and are God's Glory
Draw to me: I am one of them
When I pray.

Then becomes Earth a bosom wherein I lie:—
Earth's breasts are full of milk: they cannot feed
The babe that will not stop his crying to suck.—
Then the sky nourishes my spirit with ambrosial light:
The seals of sight are broken and with mine eyes I see.

For within, within, within me pulses and thrills
—Yea, through my nerves, taking possession of this dwelling of me—
God,—when I pray.

## Living Light

A MYRIAD firmaments of being blaze
Their passion in the phosphorescent tide,
Within whose black abysses creatures glide
By their own candle-light. Throughout the maze
O' the midnight thicket, Indians find their ways
Lighted by little passionate beetles tied
Upon their feet. Along my own wayside
Love pies the dark with beryl-coloured rays.
The ancients took a peasant up, who burned
With love, and hung him grimly on a tree,
A lantern in life's shadow-haunted wood.
Prometheus stole his fire :—but we have learned
From passion drawn asunder how to flood
High Heav'n with Earth's own arc-light, Liberty.

## Ambidexterity

NOW I set free my heart that it may go
Flying across the gulfs that intervene
'Twixt you and me, though the world's rondure screen
The goal of my desire, that lies below
The horizon. Yea, I venture it although
I be yet more divided, though between
Me and my heart the shadow of Death do lean
To part the substance of my self in two.
Arms have I, good to span a fathom's space,
Two hands, to hold together this and that:
And now, with ambidextrous soul, I will
Stretch out across these distances, until
I reach you, in the invisible habitat
Beyond the world, wherein you have a place.

## To Jesus

DEAR intimate of little folk, if now
 You seem too incommensurably great,
Is it because 'tis easier to abate
Our faith than equal it with yours ?—to allow
You the divine advantage, than avow
That other human hearts are designate
To share your mastery and free estate ?
To you as God we, unbelieving, bow—
To you that, verily divine, have trod
The way to godhood ; who, being simple, wed
Your love to Life's Almighty Will, and lo,
Upon the instant, like a river-head
Upspringing in your flesh, began to flow
Anew the world-creating power of God.

## To Blake, on his Faith

INTREPID voyager ! your helm you gave
 To a mariner from whose laconic tongue
No word but sailing-orders ever sprung
To tell you whither, o'er the perilous wave
Unfathomable, you sailed. Haply a stave
Of singing, such as children use among
Their play, into the tempest's teeth he flung :
Other it was of no avail to crave.
Nathless, 'mid the blank fog and the despair,
The ever-straining vigilant weariness
Of battle with the cruel multiform
Pack of the sea and frenzy of the storm,
The fellow's brow was clear as the moon is
Cleaving the cloudy consternated air.

## To Plato

WHEN I am uncompanioned, 'tis your hand
Touches me, and it is not chill as theirs
That are not dead these twenty-hundred years
And yet are not alive to life's demand.
Complacent with themselves they understand
Nothing of the adventurous heart that bears
Their curt indifference, because it dares
Enter a world their prudence never scanned.
You know the fields that open to the flight
Of the winged passenger ; the dizzy ways
One may not find alone, but two may win
Whose passion does not sink them into sin,
But up together into life's amaze
Lifts them, a twi-winged spirit of delight.

## To Dante in Paradise

LOVE set you forth on such a narrow way
You might not follow it, Beatrice being dead
Who'd nourished you on the transubstantial bread
Of joy paradisiacal. Astray
And hungry among desires, you learned to obey
Vain voices : but from that despair you fled
By a lonely pilgrim's path, up from the dread
Bottom of darkness climbing into a day
Wherein life shames you not :—where, unconcealed,
The beauty of her you loved enlightens you
Among the mountain peaks of Liberty,—
Because you dared to set your passion free
From silence, and embodied it in no
Impotency of longings unfulfilled.

## To Shelley

BECAUSE you thwarted not, for fear or blame
Or folly, what was ardent for the sun,
Franchise of life your eager spirit won!
Many a coal-black bitterness became
Good nourishment for that conflagrant flame,
That fiery gossamer of passion spun
By wrath and love together in unison
When body and soul and spirit were the same!
Being whole and free and purely passionate,
The myriad joys and secrecies of love
Opened to you, and to each one you lent
Worship for the divinely different
Delight that was the purity thereof,
And kept each several love inviolate.

## To Walt Whitman

YOU found a world of wonder in the west
Vaster for us than all the Americas:
You sang of freedom with a heart that was
Free, and no cage-bird sobbing in your breast,—
How you rejoiced, with new undying zest,
Each day in your own bodily house, because
You were one impulse with the ecstatic laws
Of living that your song made manifest!
And now of all the company divine
Who mingle in our destiny, 'tis you
That urge us to achieve the joy of Earth,
To bring the man-child Liberty to birth
Out of the knotted passion where the true
And false inextricably intertwine.

## To a Sea-farer

*To one going down to the Sea, whose business is in the Great Deep :*
*Who traffics with Death, and descends into the Abyss :—*

ALTHOUGH your heart be troubled and your body tremble,
So that its bones quake at the dread Water,—
Seek to hold it as you will, your inconstant thought
Catches ever some new wave of panic, and turns fleeing away :
Chide not overmuch the timid flesh,
All aghast at this untamable Sea :
Now comes your parting, since it cannot cross over :
Wherefore, O friend, lovingly reassure it.

But yourself, Voyager,—as one undismayed,
Of old times habituate to sea-going—
Did you not come thence, hither ?—
Yourself, leaving finally behind you this dear country
Wherein you have dwelt awhile,
Set your face to the Land, albeit still afar,
That ever faith holds dearer.

Thither, your face setting,
Committing yourself into the Boatman's charge
And to the bosom of the Deep,
Put faith to the touch, friend, and fare well !

Not utterly departing you depart :
Whither you go, there also Love adventures,
Abiding with you though flesh fail.

## Watching

I WATCH beside the deep
Where one I love lies sleeping:
The tides of sleep
Come creeping
Ripple on ripple up about her bed,
That seems to rise on them and float.
Ripple on ripple they creep up about her, lifting
The pillows underneath her head,
That swings now in a boat
To seaward drifting.

Silently sleeping, thus I let her go
Adventuring into the unknown,—learning
The unknown to know.
Returning—
If I but guard her wakening against fear
And perplexed wonder whence she doth awaken
And whither is come—
Then, presently—when she returns not here—
Less unfamiliar will that new world seem, and she there
less forsaken,
And Death less dumb.

Beloved, once thou art gone out to sea
The waves will welcome thee, with friendly voices!
The faith in me
Rejoices,
For through the tears that run over my cheek,
Through all this breaking, sundering, pain,
'Tis given my love to guide thee
To where I hear the voice thou lovest speak
Sea-words of greeting, that make even me fain
To speed thee forth who watch beside thee.

# A Note on Personal Expression

# Personal Expression

THERE are poets who do not need to justify their gift, since their expression is in itself sufficient justification. Others, who regard their work as contributory rather than final, feel the need not merely to justify themselves in the occupation they have chosen, but so to extol it that others more able than they may be induced to enter on it.

The artist has besides another reason for urging the claims of self-expression: his own passionate need for comprehension requires of his reader a certain fellowship in endeavour. I think that every real work of art, every genuine effort at self-expression, demands for its appreciation a corresponding effort on the part of its public.

And in that public, even where personal initiative is feeble, and the artistic craving is only for the stimulus and support of the masters, yet in so far as it arises from anything but the pampering of the senses, it represents some faint revolt against repression, some dim desire to realise inner possibilities. Thus art, properly so called, constitutes a direct appeal to the faculties of expression and to the creative power, calling for a response in whatever form is most natural to the individual.

For this reason it has seemed to me that a note on some aspects of personal expression, especially as they affect freedom, would not be out of place here.

I

BENEATH the intricacy of purposes that we call our thought—but it is the very body of the age—we feel our spirit and the spirit of man, quietly, purposefully drawing itself apart to some end unguessed, unvalued in that whirling world: some eternal simplicity that is able to contain and fulfil all.

At times, after long days of resolute seeking, we attain for an hour to that paradisiacal inner calm whose still moments are as the waters of some mountain pool wherein our thought, hitherto uncertain and febrile, becomes strangely and solemnly deliberate and sure.

In such an hour we are withdrawn from the insistence of outer noises, of our own intentions, and the associations that throng the passages of our brain. The stillness is an inner presence, filling the brain itself, and mastering every sense with its tranquillity.

Whatever the stillness may hold for us beyond its own healing calm, we are filled as we enter it with the knowledge that herein we have attained the country of our search and are come into the place where we would be.

2

FROM amid the lavish confusion of our world and consciousness, a certain ordered simplicity emerges; a purposive life selecting its own, refusing whatever is extraneous to its spirit. It condemns and judges nothing; but neither is it to be confused by the claims on its attention.

"Certainly I do not deny your value or consequence: only, to my purpose you are neither valuable nor important. Undoubtedly you have your use; some day, indeed, you and I may be of consequence to one another. But to-day and here you are indifferent to me."

Life can only proceed, creation take place, upon this basis. It is the new Puritanism, the new asceticism: the authentic and efficacious affirmation of choice, inherent in the new life.

3

I SAY new, not as though in contradiction to the old: but as spontaneous in the present, as eternally immanent in life itself, its own inner authority, the spirit incarnate in it. As the inalienable factor in individual existence that yet corresponds to the same factor in all other existences, in all existence.

New, because never foreign to the instant need. New, because leading into, because creating the future. New, because progressive and taking account of every generation's birth-throes: because always pushing forward into the unknown—a pioneer, a prophet, an adventurer, the herald of a new race.

But never merely erratically advanced. Never false to, always the final proof of, yesterday's discovery. Above all and always, practical—in the sense of vital and creative. Such is this purposive principle. Like a seed, by its own chemic power it extracts from its environment that which it requires, changing it into the body of its life.

4

Ulysses-like, it is not posed by riddles. Life's riddles are indeed insoluble save by it.

There is a tragic element in experience insoluble save by the currents of supreme passion. These do not eliminate, they absorb that element, so that it no longer obscures life's clarity but gives it the strange colour and poignancy of ecstasy. Before this else insoluble quantity, this panic horror, this disaster, this madness—only the ultimate integrity of our being is proof.

But there is that in man that triumphs over tragedy as Jesus subdued death. It is not philosophy or religion; yet indirectly these indicate its presence. It is the final factor, the very principle and spring of man's life: his personality itself, that rises to salute disaster and be proven of it.

5

Personality is essentially formative. It chooses, assimilates, rejects, in order to unfold. It individualises. It seeks to realise itself.

Thus it is purposive: though, if a purpose be regarded as some external plan conceived in order to be carried into execution, one cannot say it has a purpose. Rather, it is a purpose; since personality, though not yet fully self-conscious, demands its own realisation. I do not yet know what I am: but the knowledge comes through the effort to express myself. By our experience of life we become aware of ourselves.

THE most vital kind of knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves, is the fruit of another process than that of reasoning, though this too has its part. It is the fruit of that kind and quality of living which gives expression to the personality, thus augmenting our personal consciousness and sense of purpose.

Is not all knowledge, in its purity and fulness, the fruit of a certain wholeness or singleness of life?—a wholeness, a singleness from root to tip, that liberates our consciousness—and even our thought—from its partiality and mere individualism. This gives expression to something more absolute than these.

Especially through the exercise of such faculties as relate individuals together, and such as relate the individual to whatever may properly be called personal or purposive in our world, whether humanly embodied or no. Their exercise brings something other than our separate selfhood into consciousness.

All kinds of collaboration and partnership in effort, every kind of fellowship in experience, any doing and feeling of things together that cannot otherwise be done or felt in the same degree,—these tend to and prepare for the larger self-realisation. They foster a capacity for group consciousness.

And not these only. Every creative effort demands something more of the individual than his mere individuality affords. Not only does it call up the reserves of individuality, of the separate unit: it somehow requisitions and receives the effective aid of a power we call either genius, imagination or inspiration: a power,

whatever its nature, that not only enables him to create, but to create something belonging thenceforward to us all. Such creative effort is a real collaboration, though its result is, above that of other work, intensely personal.

Other creative acts that seem wholly individual because they effect vital changes in one's own character, are similarly co-operative, drawing as they do upon other than individual forces. They are effective because they lay hold on currents of power.

All these ranges of active experience are included in what I mean by that wholeness of living through which our personality becomes more to us than mere separateness can suggest. Through it a personality finds expression which transcends individuality. Something within me demands my life for its realisation : not as a foreign power eager to seize upon my individuality in order to effect its alien purpose, but as it were my divine, my final self, promising me fuller and less partial realisation.

7

Do not let us speak of individuality as though its limitations were barriers to self-expression. An artist might as well speak slightingly of his medium and his art. Only through its strict conditions can we attain real knowledge of ourselves, for the rise of self-consciousness requires this focus. It must begin as a single small seed if it is to put forth great branches through space.

The commencement of our effective personal consciousness dates from some supreme effort, some concentration of the whole being in a single act of the will. In the intense pointing of all that is ourself in a single

effort of realisation we catch a glimpse, as it were over our shoulder, of our very personality, and know, in so far, what we are.

8

If such acts are the final expression of our individuality, experience suggests that they are equally expressive of that common purpose that individualises us, and is the ground and background of individuality. Any such act of self-expression, however opposed to other individual purposes, yet appeals to some intuition of common feeling and understanding, basic and final, and so perhaps incomprehensible. One's heart leaps with inexplicable exultation at the recital of such an act, as though in witness to its transcendent value and sanction.

9

Obviously, it is not every enlargement of the field of consciousness that brings fuller personal realisation. Increase is not necessarily development. Every passion, every imaginative act, is not procreative of the higher life. Every god is not really divine, for there are phases of extra-individual consciousness that oppose the realisation of ourselves, the divinity of human purpose.

We recognise our contact with the divine by the growing mastery, throughout our whole being, of its ultimate purpose and *raison d'être*. We realise our union with the creative will through the rise within us of new powers of creative life.

Knowledge of such divinity can only grow with experience of the power. It manifests its activity most indubitably to us in the most personal of our experience:

not by the creating of new objects, but of new powers and new ranges of consciousness. Most of all by changing the very substance of our personal life, the very quality and character of our consciousness.

Our actual consciousness is plainly not our ultimate personality, it may even prove hostile to that. It is the secondary self, the world in which we pass our actual life: a world over whose substance we may have power. That is to say one can create for oneself such a soul-life, such a conscious world, as shall correspond to one's real self, giving freedom and expression to that, and so affording us valid knowledge and experience.

This creative power is evidently at work in certain lives. It is not indeed directly perceptible to our senses, nor can it be accurately conceived by our reason, or put into precise speech; but its presence is apprehended by something in us. Individual experience of it is, moreover, to be attained by deliberate and resolute seeking in the proper field.

Such experience shows it to differ from other currents of power in this, that it makes alike for individual and social freedom. It strengthens and develops both together. As we identify ourselves with it, it proves itself to be the driving force toward ever further evolution. We discover ourselves more surely by its activity in us.

## 10

PRACTICAL knowledge of it belongs rather to middle age than to earlier years, presupposing a certain maturity of growth. The individuality needs first to be established. It is not for any raw and green nature. Its

experiences demand sound and seasoned material. The processes of freedom are indeed at work from the beginning of conscious life, but the phase of which I am now speaking, this realisation of a fuller and even a final and absolute personality, belongs I think to middle life.

Having fulfilled the ordinary human tasks, the clean uncontaminated man or woman ought still, at maturity, to retain vast possibilities of further development. The mere continuance of the race from generation to generation, however essential as a basis, promises little in itself toward progress. It is the surplus of personal quality, of personality itself, properly speaking, in any period over that of the period preceding, that alone marks vital progress. And this depends, in very large degree, upon a development continued beyond middle age: upon the gaining of a vital second-wind, and the renewing of youth.

II

THIS further progess, this continued development beyond the average stage, depends, again, on loyalty to oneself. Vision goes far ahead of actual achievement, but it is ours to be achieved. In the interim comes many a black day of depression; many another purpose proposes itself to us. Give place to one or to the other, and you turn out of the path of your own development.

The more vital the change, the more it will demand loyalty and concentration of purpose if it is to be wrought. Doubt must be dismissed, discussion declined. We have no spare power for debate or ex planation—even if it would convince! We have not to begin a propaganda. We need all our forces at this stage to effect the purpose in ourselves.

12

TO-DAY our whole existence is immersed in a hypnotic atmosphere of explanation and apology, wherein the inexplicable realities, the elemental truths and forces of life itself—of man himself—do not appear, do not exist.

If Man, the passionate spirit of freedom, the embodiment, in this world of sense and appearance, of actual ultimate personality—if this Man is to come to birth, his heralds must prepare his way by the revolutionary affirmation of that which is free: a partial and provisional affirmation as yet, and hence false to the perfect reality, but true in comparison with the denials of freedom that serve men to-day.

For ourselves, we have to create a new world, and to shake ourselves loose from the old. We can only do this if we refuse to attempt our own justification: refuse to do homage to so-called necessities, convenances, ways of thinking. Here our own intellect, our own brain, is our most subtle and treacherous foe. It belongs to the old order. It not only looks backward over that world, it pulls backward too. To go forward, if we will believe the intellectually prudent, is madness. It is not the way of the intellect. The processes of growth and formation are not those of observation and intelligence. Though, by taking thought, we cannot add a cubit to our stature or enter again into the mother-womb of life, we may by other means become again as very little children, even as infants that suck the breast offered them.

Realising that it is no good to hunt the world over for what we require, since it is not there, we may turn at

last to that divine Mother in whose bosom we lie and know her not. Over-ripe in our individual development, with all the virtues and qualities of individualism running to seed in us, our further growth is of a different kind.

By means of other activities, only dimly suggested to-day by such terms as faith and prayer, That may grow within us which will balance, poise and render fruitful this our individuality, giving it wholeness throughout its entire range.

13

To claim naïvely and without any pretensions that, however relative one's knowledge and its expression, one is yet somehow in touch with and related to absolute and eternal being; that in all the relations of life it is one's first business to realise that relationship, affirm one's essential freedom and live as a person or spirit, is not merely to make oneself a mark for the critic, but it is to court every sort of peril. Yet not to live thus is to atrophy those faculties of growth upon which, and not upon our reason, our further evolution depends.

Whenever reason pushes them aside to guide the soul in its adventure, the way is lost. Because reason does not know, and cannot rightly direct here in this range of vital activity, in this conscious appropriation of what we lack and need for fuller self-expression.

My directing faculty must be an intuitive consciousness of the immediate claims and motions of my deepest self, for it is these I have to act upon and fulfil. Self-realisation can only be achieved through my capacity for apprehending this guidance and my loyalty in following it.

14

To recognise an immediate need and consciously seek its fulfilment is the natural order of life: its fulfilment by one's own effort, or when this fails, by the aid of others; and when the need remains still unsatisfied, or when we know instinctively that these cannot satisfy it, it is as "natural" to seek and turn to some transcendent power or helper.

Natural, I do not say logical. Indeed, it was only yesterday that the idea of such an act remained either absurd or incomprehensible to many even of the most earnest minds.

The necessarily personal character of the absolute—indeed the existence of any absolute—was long obscured in the eclipse of a deeper self-knowledge. Moreover, in revolt against the limitations of a religion that was turning men away from the fountain-head of life and inspiration, we had been apt to reject along with it the practical discoveries of Jesus and his friends, really more fundamental, and far more important to us to-day than those of Galileo or Newton, Columbus or Watt! The steam engine is not to be compared, for practical purposes, to the genuine "prayer of faith"; but it is much easier both to use and to define.

15

THIS discovery of Jesus whose significance has been obscured by the whole attitude of Christendom toward its founder, when put into the simplest terms may perhaps be described as the means by which the whole—or divine—personal purpose may be individually discovered, entered into and realised. Jesus found,

and taught those who could understand him to find, the means for satisfying this ultimate personal need by making contact with and drawing on the help required. To perform this perfectly practical and personal act—which, however, I may not have at all adequately suggested—is what he intended when he bade his followers pray. Difficult as it now is to use the word "prayer" in this sense, it is even more difficult to find a simple and satisfactory substitute.

The attempt to perform such an act is usually ineffective, because it lacks that concentration, that backing of the whole manhood that alone can achieve any vital change. The making of contact with power across an insulating medium, the projecting of desire toward its actual fulfilment, in some real sense the stretching over an abyss to lay hold of a helping hand: such acts as these cannot be lightly or easily achieved.

It may well be that the effort they involve becomes the more difficult as the need for them grows more urgent. For when the vital energy most needs replenishing, the power to effect a conjunction with its source is at its lowest. Anything but that!—we cry, and turn to whatever alternative may offer. For such an act is in its nature creative, and makes a demand upon our personality that the unilluminated part naturally regards as impracticable and incredible. Something in us responds to the vital possibility: that something corresponds to our capacity for growth. The other doubting and denying element that calls itself common sense is our inertia and incapacity.

The act can be achieved, but it is clear that no kind of passivity can achieve it; nor any mere "resignation

to a divine will." Here is the call to resolute action: and of a kind so novel to our common activities that it must make a double demand upon us. It is a leap the will itself bucks at, and refuses, till by concentration of resolve we put it thereto.

Our will is at fault. Broken to fond tasks like a circus pony, it takes a pathetic pride in the display of its foolish obedience. We are almost without that higher initiative that discovers and evolves new faculties. Indeed, our whole education, far from encouraging the creative impulse, seems largely designed to inhibit it.

And then the complexity and elaboration of modern life, its vast superficies, its universal news and knowingness, its intelligence and alertness, all tend to overwhelm and so to paralyse the will. Its impossible responsibilities, its meaningless obligations, destroy any spontaneity of self-expression.

Doubtless, the experience of all this may have its permanent value, once it is left behind. But unless we extricate ourselves from it by the consistent assertion of personal values, and the steady pursuit of our own path, we cannot attain to freedom. It is a nightmare from which we must awake.

16

AND if this modern life does not train the will to will the forward thrust of personal growth, neither does it develop the complementary capacity for relaxation and abandon. It keeps the will to futilities, holding it in an incessant tension, and supplying as an alternative either another kind of tension and excitement, or some sheer vacuity. Working-hours over, the night indeed

cometh, but the night of the city, not the ample-bosomed, life-renewing night. The whole rhythm is without balance or harmony.

To learn to relax is as hard and as urgent for most men, as to learn how to will creatively : and for similar reasons. Obviously, one part of this knowledge without the other is fatal.

You must let go. You must be able not only to reach out to and draw down, but equally to open your heart to and assimilate the power of life.

You must lie out in the sunlight and rain of the divine love, quiet and unoccupied with anything but it: until, in its April weather, the seeds of life that are in your soul—seeds of the deeper purpose, the diviner knowledge—begin of themselves to move and germinate.

We need to draw life down, to deepen our consciousness of purpose. Having pushed our individual life out as far as we may in each direction, we must withdraw into the secret desire of our innermost being until we find the answering spring of power, the hidden resources of a new range of personality. Descending thus, as it were, into the stream of life, we must hold ourself in the deep places of experience, until our whole consciousness is steeped in the incomprehensible knowledge of its mystery.*

17

THE rhythm of life has thus its feminine as well as its masculine movement. And the lack of proper oppor-

* If it be fatal not to let go, it is equally fatal to stand passive and open, without protection, in the presence of hostile, disintegrating forces. The spirit must relax and expand, but not unguarded in the presence of its enemies.

tunity for, and appreciation of this threatens all progress with disaster.

The dominant spirit of our Protestant civilisation is merely male, and fitly surrounded by an atmosphere of incessant restless effort.

Only as we can realise our membership in a greater than ourselves—a purpose that is also, as it were, a "Mother of all," does our striving become sane and able to ripen its fruit. If we conceive ourselves as essentially one against the world, against the others—a mere Protestant—and not finally one with the whole, we doom ourselves to sterility.

We must indeed have our individual part and *raison d'être*—distinct, as such, from every other; not to be done under authority, but springing from its own deep roots. But we must know it as a part. Its roots are in, and nourished of, the one life, its impulse from the one source of all life's impulse, making one with all.

Do we agonise in the travail of spiritual births?—the creative power that urges, sustains us; the one creative power, that is ever at work in its creation, like the sun's vivifying, liberating radiance. We belong to a vast fellowship of endeavour. We are supplied and nourished out of the republican treasure of love.

We have indeed to put forth all our individual strength, the whole virtue of our man and womanhood, if we are to attain to freedom; but that freedom is, in its very nature and essence, a new security. It is the communion of life, the bosom of God.

Until we realise the relation of our life work to the ultimate Personality—the absolute I AM of the old prophet—it remains precarious, anxious, feverish,

exaggerated. How little we have yet learnt to abide in the deep sense of final unity, as of branches in the trunk, or of trees rooted in the earth!

18

We dream of union and talk of solidarity, but we feel ourselves lonely and perplexed. The union and solidarity that offer themselves are so superficial, so unsatisfying. They do not really claim what we know to be ourselves, but only clamour for certain brutal sacrifices of initiative and individuality, certain acts of assent, the adoption of certain badges or beliefs. We cannot realise ourselves in them. We have yet to find the deep, the abiding and final purpose to which alone we can in any satisfying sense belong. To find?—in a sense, we have to create it.

A purpose is a centre of radiating energy, the core of unity, the more or less conscious expression of identity. To share a common purpose is, in so far, to realise community.*

Thus war, with its fierce affirmation of a purpose defined by the antagonism which it meets—war unifies the men of different race and party who are allied in it. The same may be said of religious emotion felt in multitude at some solemn festival; or again of the æsthetic delight of a miscellaneous company centred on some inspiring work of art. But of all purposes, it is

* One of the worst consequences of a merely individualistic habit of life is that it leaves one at the mercy of any of those fierce waves of common feeling, whether noble or merely specious, that from time to time sweep over a people. Unused to this kind of consciousness one is unable truly to discriminate about it; and also, one is unable to find oneself in it by proper participation.

the eternal personal affirmation of freedom that is the most universal, gathering all others into its central passion. To give oneself to freedom is not merely to give oneself to a cause ; it is to become free ; to find the final sanction for being-oneself in the individual utterance of that divine word that only man can say.

19

So to draw upon power as to be enabled to realise one's personality and deepest purpose: so to employ one's faculties that such power may actually achieve that purpose:—these are the twin secrets of growth.

Education ought to lead up naturally to the acquisition of this dual knowledge, since further progress depends on that. Religious exercises ought to relate to the use of this vital, supersensual power. The sacraments of religion—rooted in the individual's need for a concrete expression of his unity with such common life and purpose as he can apprehend—these sacraments should initiate him into and maintain him in the conscious participation in that power. For the knowledge indicated by religious teaching at its most authentic, is knowledge of the one creative life that is freedom; however remote this may seem from the recitation of creeds and litanies, or the assent to dogma and tradition.

20

To some the old terms and symbols are still vivid with vitality, actually standing, as to these none else can, for the life of freedom. Such will continue to speak of the Holy Trinity, the Kingdom and the Church: of faith and prayer: of redemptive love and atonement:

because these are the terms of their native language, and remain the only natural means of expression for their individual experience.

They will inevitably be misunderstood, for these words are used in a wholly different sense by the generality. Not only will they be misunderstood, but they are in gravest danger of confusing for themselves the significance of their own experience, through the associations which these terms have long gathered about them and now subtly suggest to those who use them even with another clear purpose.

On the other hand, those who reject these much-abused but time-honoured symbols, in so far sever themselves from the great tradition of the race, and cut themselves off from communication with many of their fellows. Moreover, for themselves, they have to learn a new tongue in which spontaneous utterance will never perhaps be possible.

It would seem best to employ the clearer, even though harsher and more cumbersome, phraseology for public explanation : while more intimate occasions demand such words as will carry the fullest, and therefore the least inadequate, burden of truth. Brought up in the Christian habit, I should violate something profound in my own nature if I rejected the poetry of Christian expression.

The intenser and more vital experience is, the less can it be suggested by any pseudo-scientific or merely rational description. Neither psychological nor philosophical terms serve here. This is the field of poetry and passional experience, whose words are the most endowed with the pulsation and rhythm of actuality. And conversely, every statement of such experience—

and the more, as it is the more authentic—must be understood as poetry. Such and none other are all the dogmas and creeds ever penned; all sacred writings and biographies, all divine words. Either immortal poetry, and as such possessed of a certain verbal inspiration that cannot be translated or paraphrased, immortal poetry ever able to express the new experience of the generations; or else dead definition, to be discarded with growth of knowledge and change of thought.

21

POETRY represents the living symbol. It is the germ of a life: the creative suggestion of new experience. Its function and flow can never cease throughout the ages. The fountain of inspiration must be constantly revitalising thought.

Poetry is a type of personal expression: it is the speech of spirit to spirit, the real language of humanity. As such it arouses and nourishes in its reader that mysterious winged imago whereof his ordinary consciousness is but the creeping worm.

Imagination transcends mere individuality. It is that faculty whereby one so enters into the experience of another as to appropriate it: so realises one's own individual experience that it becomes capable of being partaken by others: the faculty by whose possession the patient and accomplished craftsman may become a poet.

In real poetry of whatever kind, and I am not thinking now of any one mode, fancy and magic become the subtle instruments of the creative genius. The page has mystic virtue: the print conveys not merely thought but illumination. It makes an electric contact between spirits.

22

Ought we not to recognise that all beauty has a place in the vast range of personal expression? Does not the spirit within us expand in response to it as to a friend? Is not beauty the perfect language of some kind of personal commerce? Is it not the spontaneous free expression of the joy of life's inner and abiding purpose? Does it not moreover seem to solicit our response? Is not any failure in, any refusal of self-expression a blot in itself, an ugliness and discord?

I think that such failure or refusal lies at the bottom of nearly all arrested development, and is the inseparable companion of misery, degeneration, apathy and vice. Correspondingly, the submission to melancholy, misery and every form of regret and depression—in a word, every negation of joy—imprisons the spirit, and so defeats the purpose of existence. That purpose does not indeed consist in unmitigated delight and expansion: it supposes a kind of rhythm, wherein concentration and expansion alternate to produce a living growth.

Self-expression is only a part of self-realisation. But it is so essential that where it is lacking the processes of life tend to a kind of inversion, so that the individuality loses its unity. For unless it continue to represent a unifying purpose, the self becomes unable to resist the invasive separative forces at work all about it. If its own faculties do not themselves tend to tear it in pieces, they may yet, by their lack of harmony or of cohesion, offer an opportunity to such destructive, alien purposes.

## II

OFTEN when, in some crowded street, one sees a splendid horse quivering at every curb, impatiently waiting its turn in the clattering torrent of machines, one resents the ends to which life has been tamed. It is not only that creation has been as it were turned aside from its course to serve the fancy of man, but that to the deep sense of justice within us this fancy is seen to be but barbarous. Its vulgarity betrays itself in the ostentatious display of its power and triumph over nature.

But most of all in its triumph over human nature. Men have sought, and in large measure have succeeded, in taming the immanent divinity. Not content with turning all things else to a purpose less than that of life as a whole, they have sought to impose that purpose upon the very principle of life within them. They have striven to mould, and even to break the human spirit, in order that it may obey their codes, and adapt itself to their institutions. Man himself is thus subjected to the laws he gave forth ; not indeed for the sake of that freedom in whose name all law exercises its authority, but in blind forgetfulness of it, and so in abrogation of law and in the violation of manhood.

### I

THERE is that in man, and it is his manhood, which cannot be made subject to authority, because it is its source. This is the cardinal fact in any spiritual order.

Societies that usurp upon this authority destroy the principle of permanence within themselves. For they mutilate, they blind, they corrupt the soul. Every institution that encroaches upon the rights of individual spontaneity is a tyranny, and cannot but produce tyrants, slaves, cowards and essentially vicious men and women.

It is only too possible to distort the individual conscience by a false education in obedience. Tame men are already slaves. We want free men, and we want a social order that exists to set men free.

Left wholly to himself the individual does not find freedom. He needs initiation into it.

Freedom for the individual is the realisation, the achieving of his inner purpose. But that is precisely his function as a member of the whole.

I do not mean that knowledge of this can be inculcated by external influences, teachers and institutions: but that the rise of this consciousness is associated with a man's social life, his experience of love, his opportunity and responsibility. Right social relations obviously tend to encourage the sense of one's individual significance. To do this is indeed to fulfil the purpose of society toward its members. To fail here, to leave men without the sense of their individual meaning and value, is the mark of a low social development.

2

It is because the churches and institutions about us so misconceive of freedom as to thwart and distort our intuitive longings for it; because, claiming to initiate us into the secret and purpose of life, they injure and

even mutilate the delicate inner form of our yet unrealised personality, that we turn from them.

To whom then shall we turn, if individually we cannot satisfy our own needs? From whom are we to seek initiation into the fuller life? Plainly, from those who already know the secret, if they are able in any degree to transmit their knowledge, and draw us into their fellowship.

Such men and women there are, can we but learn to distinguish them from the host of would-be teachers, who do not yet possess that living truth. Here and there they may be found, realising themselves. Timidly perhaps, at first, as though dimly aware of great issues, yet ever ripening in resolve and winning new stature.

Not only are they free, they create freedom. And thereby, even if they suspect it not, they form a fellowship, bound together by that high work.

Certain among them know. They begin to realise the meaning of such fellowship, and the power that lies in it. Entering it, they become conscious members of one mutually sustaining life. They are empowered together. Together they empower and uphold one another.

Among these, virtue and goodness, too long somewhat barren and emasculated, regain their creative values. They stand once more for life at its fullest and highest. Not indeed for its rankest growth, but for the expression of its genius.

Fear is plainly seen by them as that which insulates from the creative power: sin as the choice of a false purpose, the adhesion to a lower power.

3

THOSE of whom I speak reveal life's errand. They express its excellence. Goodness, tallying with them, catches inspiration from their lives.

Taking the stupendous risks and glorious perils that attend on freedom, they achieve it. However much remains still unaccomplished, in so far they succeed.

Those who attempt and fail enlist our love and sympathy. But they must not be taken to represent heroic goodness. These pale, obscure faces of resignation or perplexity or agonised striving are not yet the witnesses of the power of God; not yet are they living prophecies of Man.

But the others, with the strong tenderness of intuitive wisdom quick to grasp the immediate need and individual condition, begin setting free now one and now another from his bondage. Bars that would not break, yield to their calmly insistent hands, through which flow the currents of liberative power. They know and fulfil the creative law: they pursue and achieve life's work.

4

THEIR consciousness attains to new ranges. For some, the very heavens stand open. A commerce with new worlds seems already to have begun, the unity of Man's life both here and beyond becoming more and more conscious in them. Such experience is in its nature intimate and personal. It does not lend itself kindly to speech. Only an inconsiderable, often a futile, fraction of it can be conveyed in words. Not because it is

abstrusely occult or fervidly emotional, but because it is purposive and inspirational.

It is the very intimacy of their contact, their very positiveness and concreteness, in a word their vitality, that prevent our discussion of these matters. They are too near us: in an ultimate sense they are too real: our relation to them is such that we cannot define or discuss them.

Not only is it impossible to prove the validity of such experience, except by its fruit, it is impossible to define it except in its own terms, and profitless to discuss it save with those who already share its knowledge.

## 5

THE quality of the men and women I am describing is instinctively opposed to occultism on the one hand and psychical research on the other. Their mysticism is an attitude toward their own, and all, personality that estranges them from these movements.

Preoccupation with so-called spiritualistic or psychic phenomena seems calculated rather to side-track than rightly to direct development. Its atmosphere is not that of progress. The various means by which the whole class of so-called mediums believe that they establish communication with disembodied individuals are little likely to further the deepening or integrating of individual purpose. I do not think it can be doubted that they work in the opposite direction. They are actually building up a barrier against the knowledge they profess to confer, by blunting the finer moral perceptions of what is and of what is not true.

6

To return to the free people: among them, few though they be, life in its wholeness seems to transcend the limits in which other lives are bound. This transcending is no otherworldly "transcendentalism," but the resolute foe of anything that would steal away and abstract the vital force from its purpose. It may indeed rightly withdraw them from the occupations of most other men and women, because it requires their whole energy and all their faculties for its creative purpose, which is precisely that of fuller incarnation. Beside this task other work may well seem somewhat vague and bloodless,—dream-work from which they have awaked. And other men may seem to such as these but dreamers. Truth and beauty have made these men their own.

For truth needs doing: beauty seems
A dream till we awake from dreams.

7

ONCE we begin to know the absolute element in and behind our individuality, and seek to express that, we become revolutionaries. We change the direction of our energy: we find a new orientation for our whole nature with all its faculties. Because we are henceforward conscious—not yet wholly, but already partially conscious of the abiding purpose that we are.

This ultimate self and purpose, this personality, this spirit, is nothing vaguely universal: it cannot express itself in mere kindly goodwill and self-effacing altruism. It is the irreducible adamant, the indestructible energy, the eternal resolution that achieves freedom. To be

free is to enter into the one wholly positive and abiding condition. Not free from relations, but free in them: free in the very root, as in all the branching out and interlacing of passion, the creative power.

Once awake to this, much that before we regarded as our duty becomes an actual treason. We are nourished at springs of life whose virtue would change the aspect of the world, enabling us to fulfil the promise of creation, did we not deflect that power to satisfy lesser but more clamant claims. So doing we become sinks into which the power pours fruitlessly.

Instead of realising the purpose within us, and thus setting free in all our relations and acts the one creative power of personality, shall we go on taking up the challenges, continue yielding to the more or less conventional demands of society upon us?

Egoism—whether Nietzschean or not—leads only into the wilderness. It consummates its pride at last in madness. It is by no freak of language that egoism is allied to idiocy.

But altruism is hardly less false to the genius of personality. Love itself may easily go astray into acts of folly and moral suicide once it loses touch with a guiding wisdom.

8

MEN claim our health and wealth, our powers of imagination and effort as theirs, and theirs after their own fashion. If we accord them what they ask as they ask it, we are stripped naked, drained of everything and reduced to impotence. Most of all when the highest treasure is entrusted to our hands.

Without wisdom, our enrichment will be our destruction. Invisible hungers will swoop upon us leaving us destitute, while they are but momentarily satisfied. So will the power be wasted, until we recognise its responsibility, and refuse it to any but its own purpose.

So long as we are susceptible to mere indulgent pity, to mere importunity, to the frivolous interference of conscientious scruples, we remain incapable of further progress. These family claims, these virtuous seductions, these fatal generosities or inhibitions, keep us impotent. If love is to realise its ultimate potency, love must become proof against them.

9

RAISED to a passion, love, hitherto responsive to any claim, grows sternly selective. Its potency has in it something implacable. Its demand admits no excuse in the beloved. It is at once implacable and pure of any coercive element. The passion of love can only find expression between comrades, those who respond and correspond, and prove themselves parts of a single purpose.

10

OUR sense of sanctity and reverence is rooted in our attitude towards personality, whether our own or that of others. It becomes unreal and sentimental when we fail to recognise the immense needs of personality: that our whole emotional inheritance is required for the supreme spiritual task of incarnation. To lavish it apart from this purpose is the work of a spendthrift.

But the fundamental need of our personal life is the need for sharing it, for partaking it together with others in some form of partnership. It is in the intensest, most passionate love and self-sacrifice that personality seeks and finds its fullest expression. We are never so much or so fully ourselves as when we lay down our life for our friends, or freely offer it to the truth. Life finds its truest word in such a death.

But realisation through an act of heroic spontaneous devotion is in clear contrast with the loss of individuality involved in the kind of self-sacrifice that is imposed and expected by others.

Self-sacrifice and devotion may be as hideous as they may be beautiful. Too often they are the fatal assent to tyrannical claims (made in the name of family duty, social obligation, patriotism, or ecclesiastical authority) usurping the inalienable rights of individuality. Such assent is not only self-destructive, it confirms the false purpose, and establishes a lie. Only when self-sacrifice is an act of personal choice can it become a sacrament wherein the whole Godhead manifests himself for a moment.

## II

In the realising of personality one is brought face to face with a special range of problems. As a man's personal quality becomes clearer and more potent it becomes as it were a mark for all those about him, all those to whom he is in any way attached, who are groping toward freedom. Especially those nearest and dearest to him. In critical hours that demand the affirmation of purpose, they turn to him. Instead of

making the effective effort themselves, they fling their weight upon him like drowning men. Or again, like unweaned children, too old for the breast, they still seek their nourishment at the cost of another's life-force, fastening themselves on such an one, and robbing him of that which his own life requires. To give to such is false generosity, forbidden by the laws of life. Not because it is a sharing of substance; but because this sort of communism defeats its own purpose, by fostering the parasitic habit.

Freedom cannot grow by such means. Without breaking the bonds that unite him to these his dependents, the free man will create in those he loves not a spirit of dependence but one of freedom. But this requires individual effort, as flight depends for the fledgling on the use of its own wings.

From those that will not seek freedom for themselves the free man has to detach his vital forces if he is to fulfil his task and purpose. There is a sense in which, whatever his affection, he cannot quite belong to those who fail to share his deepest purpose. He cannot give himself wholly to any but those who share. "Take eat, this is my body"—recalls the symbol of intimate fellowship. Of such a love-feast you partake at your peril. If you break its faith, what before was your sustenance may become your undoing.

Such partaking presupposes selection. So long as one is conscious of one's part in the whole, one has that to fulfil. The deepest passion of one's life, one's final self-abandonment, can only be toward the ineffable fulfilment of that.

12

THE whole conception of personal membership is opposed to any sort of promiscuity or indifferentism. It centres in the selective principle. This is the purposive quality of life itself, the basis of freedom, and it is this that must build up those relations that will embody freedom in a free society. The nebulosity of the "happy mass" may represent the golden age of long ago, but the golden age of which we dream will exist by virtue of personality expressing itself in the whole conscious, organic body of a society formed by that selective purpose.

Just as in the individual, personality chooses freely in order to assimilate the elements that accord with its need, so in society the same selective purpose must have free play. Potentially each is equally eligible for a place in the life of the whole, though not for any place. But the process of selection is seen in the individual response to the central purpose, which by its nature can only incorporate willing members. While all are "called" few are "chosen," few respond.

This is tragically manifest to those who have already entered into that freedom. They win a vivid insight into the capacity for co-operation of those about them. They can no longer measure men by the ordinary standards, or take them at their face-value. They see those most capable of growth, most fitted for membership, turning from it.

On the other hand they see the organisations that profess to represent the purpose of human life continually ejecting from their fellowship those men of character and imagination who are the most sensitive to the need of their time and the most eligible for freedom.

They see why to-day humanity, for all its goodwill, all its inherent force and virtue and intelligence, is fragmentary and impotent. Why the individual withers, why fellowship fails. Because they also see the radiant reality coming into being through the act of individuals here and there—more numerous than they suppose—creating that passionate freedom after which we yearn. Creating—I mean in our world of realisation, for already in some transcendent sphere it exists.

13

A CERTAIN conflict or dualism inevitably reveals itself wherever purpose is recognised. Monism and pantheism tend to deny purpose and to paralyse personality. There is a widespread inclination to substitute some vague universal consciousness for actual membership in the supra-individual life. But these two conditions are really opposed to one another.

Take the case of a highly sensitive man, lacking in individual will-power, subject to moods, often abandoned to brooding reverie; a man to whom it may seem as though Humanity itself were struggling to a birth within him. He feels himself engulfed in cosmic issues, swayed by the tides of an immeasurable ocean. Sympathy becomes in him a vast passion that threatens to disintegrate or sweep away the very quality of his personality. This condition is one of the furthest removed from mastery and freedom. It stands in sharpest contrast with the purposive life of personality. Yet the two are not far asunder. The pantheistic consciousness may be polarised into the personal, by the electric current of the will. Lacking that polarisation

it is in fact negative; the negation of a creative condition.

It is open to invasive powers. And such abound. A man of the type I am describing is aware of them; but unless he affirm himself with a double emphasis he is less fit than other men to confront them, more liable to become their prey. Whatever these hostile powers may be, they can only be kept at bay by the aid of human fellowship, or the reinforcement of the personal, the purposive vitality from its source.

Thus held at bay, and his individuality vindicated, such a man attains to a larger, fuller life than others. His purpose is more catholic because his sympathies are more universal. But if his purpose is to avail, his life must necessarily be intenser than that of others, he must acquire a firmer grasp on reality.

Otherwise, he becomes one of those that depend on others. His inability to care for himself involves another in all his perils. And even though his gratitude may become a kind of adoration, it has a parasitic root. It devours its object. Its passion leads to tragedy.

Since passion is the vortical flow of the creative power through our individuality, its rescue from such disaster is of supreme importance. And this is effected whenever passion begins to attain to the transcendent personality, to unite with the ultimate being of the beloved, and so to enter into the circuit of a greater and more enduring life. Therein it neither slays nor is it slain. Even the fierce lightnings of creative power are, as it were, obedient to its control.

In this phase, and only in this, passionate love succeeds now and again in bridging the abyss of death,

maintaining its part in an immortal relationship. Such an "attachment" holds; it is not snapped. It then affords to those who can apprehend it, the supreme evidence of personal transcendence. When it fails to hold, we seek in vain for any other witness of equal authority.

14

THE union that love seeks and demands, depends for its permanence entirely on its freedom-giving quality. Unless it enables those united by it to attain ever fuller self-expression, it must finally relax its hold and give way before some liberating passion.

Love is not satisfied merely to live and let live. It is purposive in the sense in which I have been using that term. It demands its fulfilment. Not merely in the sexual direction. Sex is but one differentiated function of passion, and by no means its highest. Passionate love, being the intense consciousness of potential union, is also the desire to give it fullest and most perfect expression. While certain passional relations require sex-expression others as surely disallow it.

May we not say that the passional life of an individual only reduplicates any one kind of relationship by a sort of inertia or stupidity, that true expression is rather to be found in the intense realisation of relationships each different in kind, each representing a different function? It is generally recognised that the passionate love of a Montaigne for a Boétie does not suffer repetition: the man has expressed himself once for all in that form. But in any generous nature such expression affords permanent roothold for an ever extending organic

growth of passional relation. Real personal union should initiate into a life of ever expanding realisation, into all the growth of freedom.

15

THE building up of a body for the larger uses of personality depends on the conquest of sex. Failing this, there must be constant betrayal, constant leakage of force, individual short-circuitings of the power that belongs to the great purpose. Communion together in the supra-individual life is a passional experience, and requires as its basis the mastery over merely individual preoccupations.

If we are to enter into the freedom of personality we must finally accept its larger purpose as our own. But to my mind that is as much as to say that first we must have faced our individual needs and sought their right satisfaction, in order that our individuality may not be at enmity with the larger life, and constantly menace our membership in it.

The conquest of sex cannot mean the denial and mutilation of our emotional life. Rather it is to be sought and won on the fields of passionate comradeship, by the discovery of the final personal meaning of each relationship, and its place in the whole organism of realisation. Only thus can chastity be truly understood as the controlling factor that, accepting the passion of sex, fixes its limitation and function. Through this control passion becomes gradually cleared and intensified, emerging from its apprenticeship to sex into the wider ranges of communion.

Life cannot dissociate itself from passion without losing its vitality. Without passion love becomes impotent. Without chastity sex ceases to belong to the personal life, and passion becomes a disintegrating force.

16

As passion rises to its higher powers, love becomes a vocation. It is the coming-into-consciousness of a "new creature"; a self-realisation that is also fellowship. Love becomes the conscious life of free and faithful inter-relation among the members of one abiding will.

The permanence of love corresponds to its freedom-giving. No imprisoning passion can create the ultimate unity of those whom in the old phrase "God hath joined together," those whom it is forbidden to any power on earth to sunder. The inner union whereof this passion is the mysterious intimation, is essentially a setting-free of life's power toward fuller realisation. To enter into this is truly to will the divine, the creative will; and therewith, to divest divinity of those conventions that inhibit its procreative power. It is to enter into the inexhaustible spring of life that is not spent with the rendering up of our individual existence; the passion in whose creative joy alone our hearts can find true peace.

17

PREREQUISITE to entering into this fellowship of freedom is a certain measure of individual realisation. Membership in the transcendent life is only possible when the work of individual incarnation has been carried far enough. Broadly speaking, the immediate business of

our life is to attain to such self-mastery and self-knowledge as to be eligible for this further development.

Freedom depends upon individualisation. It is the one foundation upon which a permanent human structure can be raised. Merely to be the tool of cosmic energies is not our purpose here. We are here in order that we may find and fill our place in the whole through the resolute, purposive exercise of our faculties and the corresponding education of our understanding.

18

RAISED to the procreative power, passion becomes revolutionary. It selects its own. It secretly reorganises society on a basis of mutual sustentation and co-operative effort.

Not indeed by institutional means. The need of our time is not for new organisations, but for the discovery of the new creative factor, the living procreative germ, that will enter into and vitalise all with its purposive life.

The need of our time is for a new revelation of personality, wider at once and intenser, that will give meaning and clarity to the perplexed confusion of our social and individual life. We need such a compelling vision of personality as will demand opportunity for its realisation, not as a system, or the demand for some new external systematisation, but as the spring and sanction for all the infinite variety, the essential idiosyncrasy of spontaneous life. It will demand that life should live by its own changing laws of growth, and that social organisation should become fluid and human enough to respond to the dynamic inner need.

Institutions tend to become arthritic and ossified; they resist and oppose spontaneity of expression. But this living organism will only become more perfectly, more completely responsive as it evolves.

I cannot see how logic is to help us much in building up the new order. Logic may be good for the elaboration of a machine, but the body of life is another matter. What can intellectual theorising do for the growth of that higher co-ordinating personality whose whole existence lies in a region that hitherto thought has barely succeeded in entering? Thought has hardly begun to grasp the nature of spirit, the final formative element of personality. And it is precisely this we have to seek by the way of expression. For those who see and feel as I do, that is our whole business. We have not got to set about reorganising society from outside, but to see that, so far as concerns ourselves, the revolutionary principle is given free play in our actual life, with all its relations and ramifications; in ourselves, and in so far as we have a part in their lives, in others, that is to say in society. And this with that instant and constant feeling for individuality and presentness which alone—and no cosmic vague idealism—is the token of spiritual consciousness.

If I seem to speak disparagingly of logic and theory, it is only that I would emphasise by contrast the vital, the dynamic aspect of truth. The processes of right growth depend as absolutely upon fidelity to truth as the processes of right reasoning. To achieve our purpose we must be wholly and fearlessly devoted to the pure truth, wholly and fearlessly opposed to every degree of falsehood. But this truth and falsehood

are not propositions. The truth we are discovering is our own ultimate and immortal being, and its discovery is attainment.

This is the only practical effectual way. We have to realise a society of infinitely differentiated parts, correlated and co-ordinated by the sense of personality that fills and forms it. Such a society cannot be built up on a vast scale by regimentation. It must be a gradual growth, dependent upon the spread of the discovery that freedom lies in such fellowship, and fellowship in such freedom. It is not merely a Parliamentarian democracy controlled and coerced by a bare majority of irresponsible voters.

But whatever it is not, this growth is the central fact and necessity of the present situation. Once let us rid ourselves of too simplistic theories as to human rights and functions, once let us recognise their infinite individuality, and we are ready to recognise therewith the co-ordinating unity that goes with it.

19

THE higher the injunctions of spiritual teaching, the more limited their application. They cannot apply equally to every condition. They are linked to their special purpose, and without that have no authority. Any attempt to enforce them apart from that only stultifies them.

Thus we cannot but feel the connection between the precept of non-resistance and the coming-into-consciousness of the transcendent life. The creative effort required of the individual if this larger aspect of personality is to be realised, demands his whole attention.

Sword and trowel cannot both be carried in work of this character. It needs both hands. The higher kinds of self-expression preclude self-defence. They call for a certain self-abandonment that seems to leave one unprotected and open to attack. And the higher the effort, the more perilous is the risk; because when one undertakes to give expression to the vaster ranges of personality one has to go out beyond the limits of individuality, until one's moral equilibrium itself is in danger. One becomes involved in risks one has no right to take unless one have the guarantee of some auxiliary strength.

That is to say, there are forms of personal expression which are only practicable to those who are able to maintain their membership in a common life that enables them wholly to devote their individuality to a special function in its body, as the family organisation allows for the dependence of the mother and her children upon the supporting strength of the father. I do not mean that the sublime faith of the non-resisting Jesus depended upon the support of his comrades, but that it was founded in his confidence that the creative effort of his life, which precluded self-defence, was cared for in the transcendent realm to such good purpose that his death would only further it.

20

THERE are—need I say it?—crises of experience through which the solitary soul may hardly pass; for which fellowship in faith alone is good: crises that require vicarious faith, vicarious endurance. If at such moments love fail, either in its hold or in its clarity of

vision, the Helpers from Beyond may be helpless to avert catastrophe. For the helping power necessarily depends upon its vehicle or conductor, and this must be effectually active if the connection is to be maintained. And it is possible for a friend to hold the connection when the individual himself is for the time unable to do so.

There is a transcendent Personal Power who, when found, both enables and protects: a Power we may connect up with, and help others to connect up with: a Power from whom we may both insulate ourselves and others. We have the faculty of making connection, of entering into dynamic relation with this Power, that can hardly function in our world save through our use of that faculty.*

21

THE intimate relation of those who partake together in such a Power, is not only fellowship, it is membership. This requires that capacity for cohesion which is represented by individual loyalty and the faculty of steady attachment to the transcendent Personality. So long as this holds, one has a supreme sense of security. The prospect of outward disaster, however overwhelming it may be, does not dismay one. But when, through nervous depletion or whatever cause—and it

* Progress must needs be slow till we gain the consciousness of receiving the aid we need and ask; till we feel the power sought actually flowing into and vitalising us. For though the "daily bread" of the supersensual life be given in response to our demand, unless we learn to eat and assimilate it we remain unnourished. One learns by degrees that the inflow of help can only be effective to the extent of one's actual receptivity.

must be remembered that the nervous system is the physical basis of consciousness—when the power of holding connection and realising membership begins to fail, then the sense of spiritual peril threatens one with its awful menace of isolation. We feel then that to be severed from the trunk is to perish. At such a moment we may be saved from despair or madness by the support of one who is intimately enough attached to be able to fulfil for us the very function of our own faith now in default, and so maintain or renew our conscious connection with the vital power.

It would not be easy to exaggerate the range of this vicarious potency, this mutual support, among those who really share in the one embracing life. It is such as to justify the use of the expression "membership in a body," when speaking of the relation between those who partake in the higher personality, though the expression is obviously suggestive only and not definitive. But the important matter is that it does suggest some of the essential facts of experience.

22

MEMBERSHIP is a living reality for those that live in it. It is the sharing together of several or many individuals, each with his distinct function, in one common purpose. The greater the individual freedom and differentiation of function, the more vital the union.

But if membership be thus vital, the welfare of each individual is bound up with the loyalty of every other, and depends on the vitality of their union. Thus, while each will count on the whole for support, the fellowship demands that none should wrongly imperil it by yield-

ing to alien claims and acknowledging foreign purposes. And undoubtedly it is possible for a member to betray the fellowship: to act as a leak, and abstract the force of the whole, knowingly or unknowingly, toward some purpose other than that which drew and holds the fellowship together.

Passionate freedom entails for its realisation so intense and vibrant a common life that even lesser individual disloyalties may, by their reverberation through the whole, bring disaster to the group. All the story of freedom is chequered on every page by tragedies of misconception and betrayal, so large is the demand it makes upon the pure loyalty of those that espouse it. The more passionate the freedom sought, the more creative the vital power embodied, so much the more exquisite the loyalty that is demanded.

23

In whatever aspect or degree one considers it, the life of freedom consists in harmonising the two essential relations of membership, individuality and participation. The free man keeps his place in the common purpose. Not only does he perform his chosen task but he senses, if he cannot clearly comprehend, that it belongs to the whole labour of creation. He knows that he is come not to destroy but to fulfil, to complete by supplying a part that without his effort would be lacking.

This knowledge holds him proof, once it is fully entered on, against the insistent claims of party. The fierce passions of race love and hate that men call patriotism, fail to turn him aside from his task. At whatever cost of misunderstanding, he must be loyal to

the life that is ever more in peril, the purpose that has ever greater need of him, than even the gods of the nations. He does not belittle the devotion of the patriot, he shares it. But he has chosen his part. Others may challenge and summons him, may declare his honour, his obligation, his love, his manhood, engaged with theirs. He does not deny it. He feels to the full the truth of this they say; but always, when he is at the point of responding with all he has and is, he knows himself restrained by an inner voice, the claim upon him of that spirit that has built his soul and body into their place in its immortal building, wherefrom he has no right now to remove. He stands indeed apart, because he cannot turn aside from his task; but in his heart he knows himself inseparably bound up with the abiding purpose of all; he is distinct but not hostile, he refuses to conform in order that he may contribute.

24

FREEDOM is a life and not a theory of life. It can only be truly communicated as an inspiration, a motive force from one man to another. Hence it must be generated: it must leap into speech and song out of a free heart. Its source lies there: it can only spring from its source.

However admirably freedom may be inculcated, it is only as a seed of life that it can be propagated. If we are to have freedom we must have free men and free women: without them it cannot exist. It can only exist in them.

The free man's purpose is single: it consists in being a man to the furthest meaning of that word that he can

apprehend. The meaning of the word depends on its living interpretation: "a man" is the highest, fullest, most vital incarnation of personality we have known. It is an image that moulds us from within, a soul that doth the body make: it is never merely what we know about men.

It is not a generalisation. It is yet more himself than a man's individual existence. He belongs to it, to give it expression. He recognises it in others. Whether he call it by one name or another, he knows it as his own ultimate reality, his absolute. It joins him to others by an immortal bond.

25

As a member of a group, the individual participates, more or less, in a life that is both within and without his own individuality and experience. Through the whole range of experience, the immanent and the transcendent seem to me to stand over against and complete one another. We begin to be aware of the conjunction and intermingling of the two factors—shall I say the two sexes?—of creative effort. From beyond, a Power invisible, imperceptible by any immediacy to sense, meets and mingles with the power put forth from within us. For those who become aware of this, the passionate need of our age is seen to correspond with an ineffable promise that leans toward and quickens it.

It is not good to try to define God, but we may well realise that our need for help, for illumination and co-operation, reaches out to some transcendent society unseen and barely conceived by us as yet: that the Past and the Dead are neither past nor dead, save to us

here and now: that all personal life has its continuity and meeting-place in God: that, in some unplumbed mystery of deep and most personal experience, we help them and they us, in Him. In some such sense as is here suggested, God will become once more free of our limiting conceptions of Him. We shall know Him, as we cease to argue and theorise about Him. We shall know Him as creative life, reached by the passionate aspiration of the whole being.

26

AND this by many channels, and by each faculty, in so far as the actual personality functions through that faculty, flows along that channel. Religion, in so far as it is emasculated by sects and sterilised by dogmas, becomes half-impotent as a means of access to the Meeting-place of spirits. Delight in nature: personal passion: social devotion: the concentrated effort of the artist, these, in so far as they set free the personality by expression, may also bring about divine contact.

That contact is by no means the result of favour: very dimly as yet we begin to perceive the condition under which it may be attained: the laws of that high commerce. Passions of beseeching may not win an answer, patient searching may not discover the secret: but the answer is given, the secret is made known under certain conditions wherein passion and patience play their part.

The divine joy will cease to be thought of as a favour awarded whether capriciously or for special individual worth: it is a realisation attained by those who have been prepared for it through processes of evolution

wherein the individual will is one but not the sole factor. It is dependent upon the right relation of the individual to the power that makes both for progress and for unity. The realisation of the divine joy is the delight of union with and in the creative will. Therein the individual achieves the consummation of personal expression.

This joy that in its creative power is at once our peace and the supreme travail of our being is necessarily social in its nature. It cannot be merely individual. For expression implies potential communication: it is the proffer of one's substance to those who need it.

The consummation of personal expression is then the communication of one's final experience: or, it may be, the sharing with others in such final experience. But if I put it in this way I seem to limit the act unduly. The true artist, in whatever medium but most of all in the flesh, cannot command the response of the public. His expression of reality is not less valuable and actual because it is unrecognised: it is not less a social act because the others fail to respond. In some transcendent sense, self-expression cannot fail to achieve its purpose of communication. The truth it utters is not lost: the beauty and joy it creates, though unnoted, are no waste product. Something in the universe is fed upon that beauty which is the blossoming of personality. Is it not the food of the gods?

Though we are as yet but dimly aware of the sanction that justifies any act of true self-expression, we begin to know that in itself it is an act of the highest worship, and belongs to the purest category of universal service. As such it inevitably transcends our moral scale of values. But we know that by such acts we enter, as by no others,

into the region of abiding reality. Not by any mad affirmation of our sole individuality, separate, irresponsible, spasmodic, its own fatal end; but by the realisation of that final phase of incarnation wherein our individuality finds its abiding place in the universe, and is henceforward free, potent, and at home forevermore, as it were a fixed point of radiant light in the firmament of life.

27

A NEW phase of incarnation is a new birth of consciousness. Personal progress proceeds by such births, or shall we say metamorphoses?

The metamorphosis of adolescence may have its parallel in middle life if evolution be not checked. A flickering of consciousness between the wholly individual and the next larger phase will continue for a period, perhaps for several years, with great strain and perplexity, before the new phase can be securely attained.

If the step forward is to be taken, due preparation must be made: the mental and moral faculties must be adjusted to the change. At present they are not. Middle life is the period in which thought and moral sympathy sets and hardens under the influence of monopolising preoccupations. We become wedded to the existing order, and a part of it. So that when the crisis comes we are the least prepared to face it and understand the significance of its issues; we have almost ceased to be free agents: we can no longer shake ourselves loose from our affairs.

Nor only from our affairs. All that which we pride ourselves upon, and rightly, our very power and faculty for usefulness, for sympathy and understanding, prevent

our becoming aware of our own need. They claim and appropriate us.

Unless the need of a man's deepest self takes first place with him it will hardly be satisfied. His effort will go in other directions, to the claims that seem more urgent. Unless the primacy of the personal need is recognised we cannot take the revolutionary step towards freedom.

28

To humble oneself to the new birth is the act of supreme affirmation. It is, as it were, a superhuman act, and the final vindication of manhood. Herein we lay down our trained faculties, even our individuality itself, to become naked of all save our inmost and instant need, that that may declare itself and win satisfaction.

Thus the way of the new birth is seen to be like the way of death, a sacrament of renunciation. Into this abyss the soul chooses to go, seeking fulfilment. Not indeed leaping wantonly at a mere venture: but going as one who from the beginning of his course has chosen this test.

29

MIDDLE life, if it take time and courage to consider, reads the lesson of experience while there is yet opportunity to profit thereby. Far from being the burning desert in whose sands the waters of youth sink fruitlessly away, middle age is the upland country at last attained: the real maturity our childish hearts longed for: life's mastery begun in the clear-eyed vision of what is error and what is truth.

The sense of sin—so grossly and tragically perverted

in us—now cleared of its perversion, slowly becomes significant once more. We escape from the dominion of fear, wherein personal expression is impossible, since fear by its inhibitions arrests evolution and petrifies life. Surrounded as we are by perils which a false optimism ignores, fear only confounds and paralyses us in their presence.

Fear had seized upon the sense of guilt until it had lost its relation to progress. It held us back, allying itself with those powers that conspire together against human development.

Life in its fresh expansion, its new spring, breaks through the circle of these inhibitory powers. It sets aside the prudence that is an intimate of fear, grasping instead the sure formative principle which it discovers in its own deepest nature, in that purpose which shapes while it expands, that basic virtue of personality. It substitutes this constraining, formative influence for that of fear: and fear, hitherto the guardian of life's weakness, gives place to the protection of the faculty that draws upon strength.

The spirit knows and chooses its own, rejecting what does not assort with its need. It draws upon a kind of vital electricity with which the nervous system is continually recharged, an energy at once attractive and repellent, that is to say a purposive force.

Since our life is largely and profoundly relational, this selective principle will make itself felt by the secret reorganisation of our relations, that is to say of society. It must needs cut across the lines of natural or blood-relationship, of party and race, because it is not the purpose that drew those lines. At its best, family unity

is in danger of thwarting the further drawing-together of men and women into fuller purposive communion.

The only bond we can rightly describe as spiritual is such a purpose as, in its realisation, will bring its members into conscious participation in a divinely personal life. Its sacrament will be the actual sharing together in the creative life of a god, it may be in the very life of God Himself. Here at last, personality will truly discover itself. The Presence—not so much of another, but of him whereof each is a part—will be known by the two or three drawn together into it: not any two or three at a hazard, or gathered by any other purpose, but the two or three drawn to one another in that only eternal bond.

Their fellowship is perfect freedom: for, to put it in a somewhat different way—while in one aspect I am, and continue to be, an individual creature, with all the creature's limitation and partiality of function; in another aspect—which my will has chosen to behold and hold to—I am a living member of that freedom that is a single creative purpose, the spiritual Body: in this aspect I am of the one spirit—God. My individuality is a fragmentary expression of my whole being, a being that is the more absolutely mine because it is also "ours." This expression I am engaged in perfecting by all the powers of my will, in commerce with the whole will. Thus I am changing a conception into a birth—a notion into a quickening spirit of life—by constant purpose; identifying in my own thought all I have and am with that Whole to which my personality adheres, that God whom I confess, that Transcendent Society wherein I share.

30

If some despairing reader, having followed me hitherto, or having perhaps skipped the intervening pages to arrive speedily at a conclusion, should now ask me to state explicitly what it is I mean, I would try to resume briefly, and probably very obscurely, as follows:

For those who have the sense of personality, the key to life and the mysteries among which it passes must be sought in the study, and above all in the expression of that. Personal expression, true self-expression, is freedom. The only secure and abiding social structure is that which embodies freedom, that which gives scope to and demands personal expression. Hence the knowledge of personality, of what it is, is fundamental for progress. But this knowledge cannot be merely psychological. It must, in large measure, be an individual discovery, the result of each man's effort toward true self-utterance. This effort brings one into touch at last with ultimate and permanent things, beyond the present range of our senses, and of our current thought. And it brings one at last, by the way of love and faith, into one's place and function, as a member of a body or society that transcends the limits ordinarily set to human life: the body of all those that will the creative will.

31

If again I should be challenged to defend such a phrase as "the sacred duty of personal expression," I would say: The words soul and spirit carry associations too vague, too opposed to what is concrete and individual, to suggest what I mean by personality.

The personality of John Smith is that mystical being that once looked forth out of his eyes into those of his intimate friend. It is the revelation of what John Smith could and ought to be, because it is the promise within him that he might fulfil. It is the potential, creative, eternal identity that wears the changing mask of the world's John Smith. It will always be what, in the last analysis of understanding insight, John Smith already is.

Personality both individualises and harmonises: it forms the unit and seeks the unity. It is not only the basis of individual freedom, which consists precisely in giving play and expression to it; it is the basis of that real society in which alone freedom can find full range.

Personal expression is the most sacred of duties both because it is the practical individual affirmation of what alone is ultimately valid and eternally true, and because it is the sole means of raising our humanity to its divine intention.

It is no merely egotistical act: expression is the basic social function. It tends to create a fellowship upon the one abiding foundation. And while that fellowship must be selective—a fellowship into which men must enter by their own choice, in which they can only remain by their own constancy—it is yet perfectly catholic and all-inclusive in its scope. The fellowship of those who make it their business to find the fullest and truest self-expression is open. It is able to assimilate every variety of individual, provided that he be true to the personal principle in himself and in others, as he can apprehend it; and that he seek fuller apprehension through fellowship. It is inevitably closed against those who feel no vital need for a fellowship wherein this sense may develop.

32

If I may venture to use a noble old phrase in a somewhat changed sense, this fellowship is the modern "communion of saints." Personality is the sacred thing: in oneself and in others. Those who give themselves to its incarnation are the consecrated, the actual "saints." Their communion or intercourse will eventually pass all the barriers that hinder life. Secure in a triple fidelity—to themselves, to one another, to their common purpose—they share a power and responsibility that others cannot. Because only such as these have the capacity for joy—the temper as of resilient steel to endure and spring back again triumphant. In and through their communion a new kind of power, a new potential of energy, a new vitality, will be experienced and find employment: but it can only be shared by those who truly become its members to will the one underlying will and create the same freedom. In them life will fulfil its promise.

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